THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RUSSIAN VERBAL ASPECT AND TRANSITIVITY

by

© JAMES DUNLAP

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Abstract

Russian verbal aspect is a verbal category. Semantically it has to do with the temporal constituency of situations, that is, how they evolve, or are seen subjectively as evolving, in time. It does this through a morphological category composed of two members in binary privative opposition. The perfective is the marked member of the pair, carrying information about some "meaning A", and the imperfective is the unmarked member. Some of the same meaning is carried in English by the simple, perfect and progressive forms, and phrasal verbs, but the relationship between English and Russian aspectuality is complex.

Hopper and Thompson use transitivity as a point of departure for exploring a wide range of linguistic phenomena. Their concept of transitivity involves a transitivity-related analysis of the role of foregrounding and backgrounding in discourse contexts, as well as ten parameters which are seen as contributing to transitivity. Here this concept is taken as the basis for an examination of the relationship between Russian verbal aspect and transitivity. The correlation between perfective aspect and high transitivity is analysed with respect to discourse and each of the ten transitivity features, organised in three groups. Illustrative and analytical material is integrated from a variety of sources, including the major works of the

noted aspectologists Forsyth, Comrie and Rassudova.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Slavic linguists have long been intrigued, and students of Slavic languages confounded, by aspect (Russian: vid).[1] Aspect is a central feature of the morphology and semantics of the Slavic verb. In this thesis, it is aspect in Russian which will be examined. Generally speaking, verbs have two forms,[2] referred to as perfective (soversennyj) and imperfective (nesoversennyj), for example "to read": citat', procitat'). These two forms present the verb's action in different ways with respect to what Comrie calls "the internal temporal constituency of a situation":[3] from an outside vantage point and as a single unanalysable whole

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[1]Transliteration has been used throughout for compelling technical reasons. I share the dislike of "native readers" for transliteration. Its unwonted appearance is disturbing, and it is harder to read. But I have submitted this once to the computer, which does not share our tastes. The system used is the "linguistic" system, used by the PMLA Bibliography, Slavic and East European Journal and Russian Language Journal.

[2]Following Forsyth (J. Forsyth, A Grammar of Aspect: Usage and Meaning in the Russian Verb, 1) I decline to become involved in a discussion of whether or not aspect forms should be considered as two separate verbs or two forms of one verb. This is a question which I am happy to beg, revealing by my choice of words my own bias in the matter. It seems to me relatively unimportant. There was a time, of course, in the history of aspectology when it was of considerable importance. But now with the category of aspect firmly accepted, and separate paradigms for each infinitive in general use whatever one's theoretical view of the true nature of "the verb", the question is much less vital. Thus I incline to Forsyth's view of it as "a controversial question which need not interest us here" (1). Those who do not share our attitude are invited to consult Maslov, 1959, 167-72, for a fuller discussion, which, by the way, ends up agreeing with my bias.

[3]Bernard Comrie, Aspect: An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems, 3.

(perfective) or in some other way, for example, in the process of being carried out (imperfective). We shall return later to the question of the definition of aspect and some of its ramifications particularly with respect to Russian, but it can be noted immediately that the exact meaning of the aspect forms varies widely according to context. The sum total of all these variations makes up a pattern awful in its complexity. Native speakers, of course, have intuitive command of this pattern and are, unless they should happen to be linguists, generally quite bewildered by the idea that aspect could form the subject of lengthy and ponderous inquiries. "Aspect? Why it's really very simple. Imperfective is delat' and perfective is sdelat'", they will declare, quite pleased at having remembered what their teachers told them, and confident that there is an end to the matter.

The student, and in his heart of hearts often the linguist too, seeks a definition of aspect which will explain, or better still predict, its many uses, a formula for analysing it in its many manifestations. But the search for an all-embracing definition of aspect is at once fascinating and frustrating. The complexities of aspect are such that such a definition remains beyond our grasp, always at the trysting place which is the next-to-be published

monograph on the subject. Like the true wayfaring Christian[1] who is to seek first not the perfect credal formulation of God's nature, but rather "his kingdom and his righteousness",[2] so too must the serious student seek first to understand and manipulate the aspect system and not to define in words the quicksilver that is aspect itself.

But linguists, of course, are not bound to be practical – only "scientific" as they sometimes like to say, that is, reasonable.[3] Thus the quest goes on. And for students, too, it is not of course amiss to have some general notion upon which to hang a great deal of useful information about the stuff of language, which is meaning and how it is conveyed. In this study, this general notion will be transitivity, a concept of great breadth and power, in the light of which various features of aspectual usage and meaning in Russian will be looked at, after aspect itself has first been examined. This examination of aspect will include a discussion of what aspect is, how it functions, and some of the problems associated with it. Then transitivity as it is to be used here will be defined and finally an examination of how aspect usage and meaning is

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[1] The phrase is Milton's in Areopagitica.
[2] Matthew 6.33.
[3] On the current practice of calling everything "scientific", a reflection of the ideology of our age, Punch cogently commented, "These undisciplined new academic disciplines envy the scientific rigour of the hardier sciences and try to hoodwink us with pretentious lingo so as to achieve the respect they suppose they deserve. In the process they contribute to the gaiety of nations, because pretension and pomposity are fertile sources of absurdity." (April 6, 1977, 600.)

related to a series of components of transitivity will be carried out.

II. WHAT IS ASPECT?

A. Aspect and Time

Comrie's general definition of aspect, already cited in part above, is a good starting point for a discussion of the question, "What is aspect?": "Aspects are different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation."[1]

Syntactically, aspect is connected with verbs or words derived from verbs. The word "situation" was chosen here by Comrie in preference to words such as "action", "event" or "process" in order not to exclude anything that can be described by a verb, including states. The definition includes the word "temporal", which in connection with verbs immediately evokes tense. Confusion of aspect and tense is in fact a tenacious feature throughout the history of the treatment of aspect by grammarians, and one which has become an apparently permanent part of the landscape in, for example, English and French.

Both aspect and tense have to do with time, and to some extent they interact and determine each other. For example, the Russian perfective non-past has, with a few exceptions, future meaning, whereas the imperfective non-past can have present, "atemporal" (habitual or present of eternal verity), or future proximate[2] meaning. Adding the

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[1]Comrie, Aspect, 3.
[2]E.g. On priezžaet segodnja večerom, He is coming [by car] this evening.

appropriate form of the future of byt' makes it clearly future.' But the relation of aspect and tense to time is essentially different. Tense is concerned with locating the situation in time by relating it temporally to something outside of itself, either the moment of speech (absolute tense) or some other reference point (relative tense).

But while tense concerns "situation-external time", aspect deals with the internal temporal make-up of the event, "situation-internal time".[10] The way in which this internal temporal make-up is presented – or not presented – can have consequences for the way the situation is related to other situations, and expression of such relations is an important use of aspect. Nevertheless, such relations are not directly and primarily what aspect describes. The use of aspect to place one situation within another is a classic example of expression of a relation as a consequence of what aspect says – or does not say – about the internal constituency of each action.

Ivan čital, kogda ja vošel.
John was reading when I came in.

The second verb expresses the totality of the situation (here, my entry). The beginning, middle and end are all together, seen at once or more accurately as a whole. But the first verb in this context, that is followed by kogda

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'Other relations between aspect and tense exist. Their overall pattern is quite complex and could form the topic of a separate study. It will not be treated in detail here. For an introduction to the area, see A. A. Bondarko, "K problematike funkcional'no-semanticeskix kategorij", 25-7.

[10]Comrie, Aspect, 5.

plus a perfective verb, indicating a single event,[11] makes reference to the internal temporal constituency of the situation it describes. It is presented as ongoing. The imperfective has the capacity, which the perfective does not, to present the first event to the listener (or reader) as a context within which the second event occurs. This sentence places him within event one, but confronts him with event two as a whole.

Is the difference being expressed here in Russian and English the same? It will have been observed that Russian cital and vosel, referred to in Russian grammar as past imperfective and past perfective respectively, are translated by English was reading and came in, which are traditionally referred to in English grammar as the past progressive and simple past tenses. But in linguistic terms, the distinctions expressed by the English simple and progressive forms are in fact distinctions of aspect, despite the traditional terminology classing them as tenses. This is so because they do not locate the situation they express differently with respect to an outside reference point (situation-external time), but rather present the evolution of the situation in time differently (situation-internal time). Comrie illustrates this by pointing out that il lisait (the so-called "imperfect

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[11]In English, the progressive, being a marked form, automatically provides this reference to internal temporal constituency. In Russian, the unmarked imperfective does not, and this interpretation of it can only arise out of the context. See later discussions of marking, and of aspect in English and Russian.

tense") and il lut ("simple past") in French and he was reading and he read in English all express absolute past tense. Therefore, although there is a difference between the two forms in each language, the difference cannot be described as one of tense, since both are absolute past tense. "It is in this sense", says Comrie, "that we speak of aspect as being distinct from tense and insist on such oppositions as between perfective and imperfective being treated as aspectual, even where the grammatical terminology of individual languages has a tradition of referring to them as tenses."[12]

Comrie suggests that a possible reason for this labelling confusion, that is lack of adequate differentiation, seen in languages such as French, is the lack of a morphological marker of aspect as overt as that found in languages such as Russian. In Russian a separate element, either prefix or suffix, can be pointed to as indicating aspect. But French, for example, has no morphological segment corresponding to the aspect difference between the simple past and imperfect.[13] This argument does not apply to English, however, where one can point to the "-ing" segment in the participle of the progressive forms as marking aspect, as opposed to tense, which is indicated in the appropriate form of the auxiliary "to be". But while this is a stable and readily-identifiable feature of the progressive forms, it is not unique to them. It also occurs

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[12]Comrie, Aspect, 3.
[13]Comrie, Aspect, 97-8.

in the participle outside the progressive and in the gerund. Perhaps this has something to do with the long-standing tradition in English grammar of failing to identify the progressive as something other than a tense.[14]

It is interesting to note that even in Russian, where the aspect category is now so universally recognized, there was a time when this was not the case.[15] Lomonosov, the great pioneer of Russian philology, did not deal with aspect as a category at all. His treatment of the verb included a system of ten "tenses", many of which were aspectually based, all as part of one verbal paradigm.[16] In this he was following the high-prestige models offered by the classical languages and Western European languages such as French and German. Johann Fater (1809) and August Wilhelm Tappe (1810) did not jettison Lomonosov's multi-tense system, but where he had spoken of one verb, they spoke of separate verbs, related and with a common stem, belonging to three (Fater)

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[14]However, at least some linguists have long recognized and referred to the English progressive as expressing an aspectual rather than a tense distinction. See, for example, George O. Curme, Principles and Practice of English Grammar (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1947, reprinted 1966), 55: "Progressive Aspect. This aspect, also a prominent feature of English, takes the progressive form . . . ."

[15]The history of approaches to aspect will not be dealt with systematically in this thesis. There are two reasons for this. First, V. V. Vinogradov has already done a splendid job of dealing with it. See Russkij jazyk, 2nd ed., 379-94. Second, relating aspect to transitivity, which will be the object of the second part of this thesis, is quite a novel approach. A rehash of early treatments of aspect would have little bearing upon it and be of slight use to the reader.

[16]Vinogradov, Russkij jazyk, 380-1.

or four (Tappe) aspectual types.[17] N. I. Grech (1834) had a total of six aspects: indeterminate, determinate, iterative, semelfactive,[18] and, for prefixed verbs, perfective and imperfective. Not content with this, he added five more sub-aspects, mixtures of the main ones. But he referred to all these somewhat mysteriously both as "grammatical tenses" (as distinguished from the three "natural tenses", past, present and future) and as "aspects".[19]

A. V. Boldyrev (1812) was the first to explicitly oppose Lomonosov's view of the different aspect forms as tenses within a paradigm.[20] Grammarians in the mid-nineteenth century, notably G. Pavskij, K. S. Aksakov and S. Shafronov gave a central place to aspect, treating related verb forms either as separate verbs or as one verb but stressing that within this one verb aspect was a category distinct from tense. In reaction to the earlier situation where aspect was recognized not at all or in subordination to tense, these grammarians saw aspect as a peculiarity which marked off Russian from Western European languages.[21]

Aspect in Russian is now clearly and universally recognized as a verbal category. But many problems remain. It is not clear exactly where its boundaries should be drawn, exactly what it is, or how to explain its meaning in

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[17] Vinogradov, Russkij jazyk, 380.
[18] In Russian, odnokratnyj. The term indicates single actions.
[19] Vinogradov, Russkij jazyk, 381-2.
[20] Vinogradov, Russkij jazyk, 380.
[21] Vinogradov, Russkij jazyk, 384.

certain situations. One of these problems which will now be examined, is the distinction between aspect and Aktionsart.

B. Aspect and Aktionsart

One thorny area in the definition of aspect is the distinction between aspect and Aktionsart (sposob dejstvija in Russian, procedural in Forsythian terms). Both terms can be used in two senses. Aspect in the broadest sense refers to possible semantic oppositions of the aspect type, whether or not these form the basis of a grammatical category in a given language. In a narrow sense, which is the normal one in Russian, it refers to a particular aspectual opposition which has been grammaticalized in a particular language, that is, has become the basis of a grammatical category covering the whole of that language.

Similarly, Comrie points out that the term "Aktionsart" is used in two different ways.[22] In the first, it refers to lexicalization of the relevant semantic distinctions, and is similar to the notion of "inherent meaning" which is the basis of "semantic categorization" of verbs into punctual-durative, telic-atelic, state-dynamic, and so on. Hopper and Thompson's definition is of this type.[23] They define Aktionsart as "lexical aspect", which in turn is "those manners of viewing an action which are predictable

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[22]Comrie, Aspect, 7, note.
[23]Paul J. Hopper and Sandra A. Thompson, "Transitivity in Grammar and Discourse", 271. This article is the point of departure for the second part of this thesis.

from the lexical meaning of the verb, such as punctual and durative – in other words, the inherent type of action of the verb." But "Aktionsart" is used in a second sense "by most Slavists, and often by scholars in Slavonic countries writing on other languages". In this second sense, it refers only to those lexicalized aspectual distinctions made "by means of derivational morphology". This, as every good student of Russian knows to his sorrow, means prefixes, as well as the odd infix.[24]

It is in this sense that Forsyth speaks of Aktionsart ("procedural" in his terminology). In Russian there are a host of prefixed verbs whose relation to the unprefixed forms is that they express the same type of action but add some nuance specifying how the action develops. Examples include poxodit' (Aktionsart: limitation, attenuative), perebrat' (Aktionsart: one after the other, distributive-totalising), and zagovorit' (Aktionsart: beginning of action, inceptive).[25] Although it is possible to class verbs under various Aktionsarten according to what prefixes are used and with what meaning, Aktionsart is not a universal category for the whole language as aspect is, nor is it binary. That is, not every verb form can be

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[24]A. V. Bondarko, Vid i vremja russkogo glagola, and indeed almost any manual dealing with Russian prefixes can be taken as an illustration of this approach.

[25]From Forsyth, Grammar, 19. Other Aktionsarten covered by Forsyth (Grammar, 20-25), include absorptive (za- plus reflexive), terminative (do-, ot-), totalising (pro-, s-, na-), resultative (do-, iz-; na-, vy- plus reflexive), durative (po-, pro-), comitative (pod-, pri-), and intermittent (po-, -yvat', -ivat').

classified as belonging to one member (or occasionally both simultaneously) of a pair, and often the category is irrelevant.

Thus in Russian where one aspectual opposition has become the basis of a grammatical category, it is referred to as "aspect", whereas others, expressed only lexically by means of derivational morphology, are called "Aktionsart".[32] Thus Forsyth is at pains to point out that "when the term 'aspect' is used in connection with non-Slavonic languages, it usually refers to nuances concerning the manner in which the action proceeds in time . . . which in Russian correspond not to aspects but to procedurals."[33] Comrie does not use the term Aktionsart. Instead he uses the adjective "aspectual" to refer to aspect in the broad sense – "semantic aspectual distinctions . . . irrespective of whether they are grammaticalized or lexicalized in individual languages" – and the noun "aspect" (most of the time) and "aspects" (all of the time) to refer to aspect in the narrow sense – "particular grammatical categories in individual languages that correspond in content to the semantic aspectual distinctions drawn." He adds, perhaps a trifle optimistically, that "once the policy of the present

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[32]See, for example, Bondarko, "K problematike", 21, who follows Maslov, whom he cites extensively, in seeing the difference in range as the defining difference between the two. Aspect, covering the whole language, is a "grammatical category". Aktionsart, more limited in range, is "lexical".

[33]Forsyth, Grammar, 356. He also mentions Maslov's use of the term vid v sirokom smysle (aspect in the broad sense) to refer to what he calls aspect as used in connection with the non-Slavonic languages.

book has been grasped it should not occasion confusion."[28]

We have world enough, and time, to point out another fuzzy area relating to Aktionsarten. Prefixes marking Aktionsarten are bounded on either side by prefixes which modify the verb stem either more or less than Aktionsart prefixes do. In the first case they form separate verbs which Forsyth calls "lexical derivates".[29] In the second case, they have a purely aspectual meaning, forming perfectives from imperfective roots, in which case they are known as "empty prefixes".[30] The perfective so formed together with the imperfective make up an aspectual pair, that is, a pair of verb forms with the same lexical meaning, different only in aspect.

As these three types of prefixes[31] form a continuum rather than discrete blocks, it will be readily comprehended that just where to draw the lines dividing them is still, and likely will ever be, a controversial question. Some, mostly foreigners, have tried to make pairs for as many verbs as possible.[32] Others, including Maslov and Isačenko tend to deny the existence of empty prefixes and treat

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[28]Comrie, Aspect, 7.
[29]Forsyth, Grammar, 18. Examples include prixodit', vybrat', and ugovorit'.
[30]For example, smotret', posmotret'; pisat', napisat'. Vinogradov, 381, points out that N. I. Grech (1834) was the first to distinguish prefixes which affect the lexical meaning of the verb from empty prefixes.
[31]It should be noted that many prefixes occur in two, some in all three categories, sometimes even with the same verb, as with, for example, procitat' and zasmejat'sja (Forsyth, Grammar, 42).
[32]Forsyth, Grammar, 37.

sceptically aspectual pairs involving one prefixed member.[33] The logical conclusion of their approach is the total rejection of prefixal pairs, a conclusion the Academy Dictionary seems to have accepted.[34] Rejection of prefixal pairs seems counter-intuitive, and intuition is reinforced by 1.) transformations from perfective past to imperfective present historic and from perfective imperative to imperfective negative imperative, which shows that verbs like citat'/procitat; pisat'/napisat'; varit'/svarit' and budit'/razbudit' all function like aspectual pairs, and 2.) the absence of secondary imperfective forms (characteristically formed from perfectives with non-empty prefixes) such as *sdelyvat', *napisyvat and (this one is particularly hilarious for some reason) *razbuzivat'.[35] The middle ground between pairing everything and pairing nothing is adopted by Ozegov in his dictionary.[36]

C. The Subjectivity of Aspect

One way in which aspect contrasts with other verbal categories is in its subjectivity. By this it is meant that the difference it expresses is often only in the viewpoint of the speaker, or the way he chooses to approach the situation; it is not an objective difference inherent in the

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[33] Forsyth, Grammar, 30-31, 38-39.
[34] For example, it mentions no connection between verbs such as citat' and procitat'.
[35] Forsyth, Grammar, 40-41.
[36] S. I. Ozegov, Slovar' russkogo jazyka. 4th ed. Moscow, 1960.

situation itself and apparent to any observer, whether or not he is party to the speaker's utterance. In this, aspect differs from, for example, number[31] or tense.[32] Comrie observes that aspect difference "is not necessarily an objective difference between situations, nor is it necessarily a difference that is presented by the speaker as being objective".[33] Thus the same situation can be referred to by the same speaker at the same time (i.e., virtually the same, the same with respect to the action) with different aspect. This is clearly not the case with tense.

Ivan procital ėtu knigu vcera.
V to vremja, kogda on ee cital, prisel poctal'on.

John read through that book yesterday.
While he was reading it, the postman came.[34]

It is such uses of aspect that Isacenko no doubt had in mind when he compared the aspect distinction to a parade viewed from the reviewing stand (perfective) or by a marcher

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[31]Although even here there is the possibility of different points of view on the same reality, e.g. collective versus plural; and pluralia tantum: "trousers" (brjuki) as plural, as they are in English and Russian, seems odd to the French, who say "un pantalon", and queer to the point of inscrutability to the Chinese, who do not have pluralia tantum at all and for whom trousers are resolutely singular (yi^{4} tiao^{2} ku^{4} zi.). (These and subsequent Chinese examples use the Chinese pinyin transliteration, but tones are indicated with Wade-Giles superscripted numbers instead of the pinyin diacritics, proving once again the error of Kipling's "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet".

[32]Here too there is some subjective margin in terms of what is seen as being simultaneous. French, for example, is more rigorous on this than English.

[33]Comrie, Aspect, 4.

[34]Russian aspect can also express much more subtle differences involving a different highlighting, e.g., Ona prosla/proxodila mimo dereva s ulybkoj. This is discussed in more detail below under "Discourse".

(imperfective). Launer cites this immediately after giving his own formula, which is Forsyth's with the capitalized words added: "a perfective verb expresses THE SPEAKER'S PERCEPTION OF an action as a total event summed up with reference to a single specific juncture."[41] Hulanicki approves of this addition, although his own choice of words is less categorical than Launer's: the choice of aspect "reflects not so much the action's objective character as its perception by the speaker, the speaker's point of view".[42]

He adds Bondarko's comment: "It should not be forgotten that the aspect category reflects not the real character of the action, but rather a dual view of the action, which can be the same in meaning when the verb's aspect is different."[43] This remark, like Comrie's, does not assert that aspect is necessarily, fundamentally subjective, just that it can be so.

Forsyth goes somewhat further and sees in "the subjectivity of the aspectual view" the basic difference between aspect and Aktionsarten, which present, according to

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[41]Michael K. Launer, "Can Aspect Be Taught?", I, 24. Forsyth does not elaborate on the meaning of "juncture", which he uses in its usual English sense. For a discussion in Russian of its meaning and appropriateness, see Lev Hulanicki, "O nekotoryx slucajax 'konkurencii' glagol'nyx vidov", 23. Hulanicki's name in transcription from Russian is Guljanickij, but I adopt his spelling throughout.

[42]Lev Hulanicki, "O nekotoryx slucajax".

[43]A. B. Bondarko, "Opyt obscej xarakteristiki vidogogo protivostavlenija russkogo jazyka" in Ucenye zapiski instituta slavjanovedenija A.N. SSSR, t. XXIII, 1962, 192. Cited in Hulanicki, "O nekotoryx slucajax", 23.

him, an objective view.[44] "The question of how the action proceeds in reality" declares Forsyth, "does not enter into aspect."[45] Just what this means is not completely clear, although a bit later he speaks more precisely of "the manner or degree to which the action in reality proceeds".[46] This much is clear: there are many contexts in which aspect does express differences in objective reality, or conversely, in which choice of aspect is determined by that reality. There is a considerable difference between Kogda on priexal, ja umiral and Kogda on priexal, ja umer. In fact, barring resurrection, it is difficult to see how the second statement could even be made.

D. Aspect as a Privative Opposition: the Concept of Markedness

> Ja pokupala novoe plat'e, kogda zdanie zarvalos'.
> Ele ele ostalas' v zivyx.
>
> Vidis', kakoe krasivoe plat'e ja sebe kupila?
> A gde pokupala?[47]

In the second context, we are clearly dealing with a dress which has been bought, in fact every bit as bought as if the speaker had chosen to say kupil instead. Thus, in contrast to the examples in the previous section where the same

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[44]Forsyth, Grammar, 356. For a discussion of Aktionsarten, see above.
[45]Forsyth, Grammar, 356.
[46]Hulanicki, "O nekotoryx slucajax", 357.
[47]Further examples of this type, which involve a switch of attention away from the object, can be found in Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 40-1. This phenomenon will be discussed further below.

objective reality was expressed by different aspects because of a subjective difference, here the same past imperfective verb can describe two situations, presenting the action of the verb in ways that are objectively radically different, depending on the context in which they occur.

Here we are confronted with one of the most significant features of the Russian aspect system: it is not symmetrical, in that one member of the aspectual pair is marked, whereas the other is not. A corollary of this is that the aspectual opposition must be viewed as asymmetrical and privative.[40] What do these two statements mean?

First there is the question of markedness. The terms "marked" and "unmarked" are used here in the classic Jakobsonian sense.[41] Thus if one member of a binary pair of morphological categories (composing a single grammatical category such as aspect) indicates A (marked), the other does not indicate B, nor does it indicate not-A; rather it simply does not indicate A (unmarked). It says nothing about whether A is present or not. Or, as Jakobson puts it, its general meaning "is limited to the absence of 'A-indication'."[42] In Venn-diagram terms, this means that we have a field representing the universe of situations, with one circle inside it. This circle, equivalent to the area of the semantic field where A is present, is indicated

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[40]Hulanicki, "O nekotoryx slucajax", 21.
[41]Outlined in "Zum Struktur des russischen Verbums", Charisteria Guilelmo Mathesio quinquagenario . . . oblata, 74-84, Prague, 1932, cited in Forsyth, Grammar, 7.
[42]Forsyth, Grammar, 7.

by the first, marked, member of the pair. The second, unmarked, member has no circle corresponding to it and therefore in and of itself it does not permit the designation of any narrower area within the field (although the possibility that it may do so in certain contexts through contrast with the marked member, interaction with adverbials, and so forth, is not excluded, as shall be seen in more detail later).

A pair composed of a marked and an unmarked member defined in this way is necessarily asymmetrical. The marked member inherently indicates something, the unmarked one does not inherently indicate anything. The marked member narrows and restricts our view, or to say the same thing positively, gives us some concrete new information, the unmarked member in and of itself does not do so. This particular kind of asymmetry can be called privative. The marked member of the pair deprives us of certain possibilities which the unmarked member leaves open to us, is more specific in what it communicates, and is therefore more precise, more burdened with meaning.

This use of the terms "marked" and "unmarked" is based on a logical distinction, and as such must be distinguished from another possible use based on a statistical or mathematical distinction between what is frequent and what is not. Under this second definition, what is less common and therefore more attention-drawing is called "marked", while what is more common and therefore in lower relief, is

called "unmarked". Such use is common when the features involved are not inherently meaningful, as is the case in, for example, phonology, and it is sometimes applied to aspect as well.[51]

Whatever the merits of this approach in certain local areas within the category of aspect, it is not what is meant when "marked" and "unmarked" are used with reference to the whole category. Jakobson specifically warned against this interpretation: "The investigator . . . must not equate the statistically predominant meaning of the category with its general meaning . . . ."[52] Comrie notes that the frequency criterion does not work with Russian.

> In a detailed statistical analysis of both conversational and nonconversational material, Josselson[53] comes to the conclusion that in both kinds of style, the Perfective is in fact rather commoner overall than the Imperfective (in conversational style, 53.1:46.9; in nonconversational style, 57.5:42.5), and this in spite of the fact that there is an Imperfective Present but no Perfective Present. Within the Past Tense, the Perfective is more frequent than the Imperfective by a factor of about three to one, while in the Future the predominance of the Perfective is even greater.[54]

But he allows for the possibility of what could be called "contextual markedness" different from the markedness of the overall category and based on a frequency criterion:

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[51]Oscar Swan, for example, suggests that "with result verbs the unmarked form is the perfective, since it is by far the more natural and expected form" ("The Mystery of the 'Imperfective-Completive'", 519).
[52]Jakobson, "Zum Struktur", in Forsyth, Grammar, 7.
[53]H. H. Josselson, The Russian word count and frequency analysis of grammatical categories of Standard Literary Russian (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1953), 20-2.
[54]Comrie's footnote.
[54]Comrie, Aspect, 113.

> Another application of markedness relative to context would be to consider whether, for the expression of a given meaning, one or the other aspect is the more usual. In Russian, for instance, although one can say either ja zakazyval (Ipfv.) borsc or ja zakazal (Pfv.) borsc for 'I ordered borshch', i.e. without any implication of imperfectivity, it could be argued that in order to express this situation the Perfective is the unmarked form, while the Imperfective will always add some special nuance, for instance general factual meaning.''

Comrie here is using "unmarked" practically as a synonym for "ordinary, usual". That this is the case is made clear first because the perfective here carries the same meaning, communicates the same information, as it does generally, and does not become "noncommunicative", semantically neutral, and second because what Comrie chooses to give as an example of what he somewhat quaintly calls a "special nuance" is "general factual meaning". It would be difficult to imagine a use of the imperfective less special and less nuanced than this, and it would be difficult to argue that the imperfective in this sense is any more "marked" in the privative sense than the perfective.

But there is a contextual marking which is compatible with the notion of privative opposition for the aspect category as a whole. This is contextual marking of the imperfective, concurrent with the retention by the perfective aspect of its markedness. Thus in the given context both aspects carry a semantic load in addition to

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''Comrie, Aspect, 122. In Russian obscefakticeskoe znacenie. See discussion below under "Communicative Direction and Aspect". The so-called "Russian perfect" is a subset of it. See "Perfective and Imperfective Perfect and Transitivity" below.

the lexical meaning of the verb. It would seem that this is generally the case with the verbs of motion and verbs of "reversible action" (brat', otkryvat', vkljucat' etc.), referring to single events in the past, although such markedness, unlike that of the perfective, remains less than absolute, and is subject to the vagaries of the context. This is examined in greater detail below. Another example of what could be called a contextually-marked imperfective can appear when the imperfective is used in contexts where the perfective is normal. In an article dealing with the choice of aspect with verbs communicating single actions, Rassudova comments: "The replacement of a perfective by an imperfective verb in a typically perfective context, if it is possible at all, usually brings out (podcerkivaet) the process or extension-of-action meanings of the imperfective."[32] She gives as an example Posle okončanija prenij dokladčik otvetil/otvecal na zadannye emu voprosy, commenting that here the imperfective has what she calls a konkretno-processnoe meaning.

Cases such as these have led Spagis to speak of the imperfective as having in some cases "aspectual meanings" (extension, non-completion, repetition, etc.), which appear only with the help of a context and in others transmitting a "non-aspectual" meaning, simply naming the action.[33] (This latter is often called the "general-factual" meaning of the

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[32] Rassudova, "Vybor vida glagola i kommunikativnaja napravlennost' predlozenija", 24.
[33] A. A. Spagis, Parnye i neparnye glagoly v russkom jazyke, 251-58.

imperfective.) Hulanicki objects that Spagis here "deprives the aspectual opposition of its universal character",[88] but this objection seems overdone, or based on a misunderstanding of Spagis's admittedly odd use of the term "aspectual" or both. Jakobson said that the general meaning of the imperfective is "the absence of 'A-indication'", but we never promised Hulanicki the rose-garden of "universality" if by that it is meant that the imperfective must never, even in synergic combination with a particular context, transmit anything more than the lexical meaning of the verb. What Spagis means by "aspectual meanings" of the imperfective is meanings peculiar to the imperfective (that is, outside the semantic possibilities of the perfective) which appear from time to time with the help of a context. What he means by "non-aspectual meaning", the absence of "A-indication", of anything beyond lexical meaning, is what Jakobson called "general meaning". Jakobson is explicit on this point:

> If in a given context category II expresses the absence of "meaning A", this is merely one of the uses of the category in question: the meaning here is conditioned by the situation, and . . . the investigator . . . must not equate [this meaning] with its general meaning . . . .[89]

The implications of the imperfective being the unmarked member of a privative opposition are summed up in a neat and pedagogically useful way in a definition of the imperfective by Sullivan, cited by Launer:

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[88]Hulanicki, O nekotoryx slucajax, 22.
[89]Jakobson, "Zum Struktur", in Forsyth, Grammar, 7.

> Sullivan[10] calls the imperfective the "slop" category: any verbal situation that does not meet the precise requirements of perfective, that fails to fit in the perfective "container," slops over into imperfective.[11]

To this it should perhaps be added that the imperfective can be used not just with situations which "do not meet the precise requirements of perfective", but also with situations that do, if the fact of the situation meeting those requirements is something that the speaker does not want or does not choose to go into. This presumes, of course, that the context is not one where the "contextually-marked" imperfective appears, in which case he may not have this unmarked, "no-comment" option.

E. The Mystery of "Meaning A": What Is Marked?

The discussion of Russian aspect as a privative opposition in which the perfective is marked, conveys some "meaning A", has precise requirements, and so on has now been carried forward for some time without any attempt having been made to specify just what this "meaning A" is. It would clearly be desirable to do so. Alas, this is easier said than done. Suggestions which have been put forth for the content of 'A' include: completion (Jakobson),

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[10]W. Sullivan, "Aspect and Imperfective in Russian," paper read at XI Annual Southern Conference on Slavic Studies, Miami, Fla., 1972. Launer's footnote.

[11]Launer, "Can Aspect Be Taught?", I, 24. This comes at the end of the clearest short presentation of the concept of markedness and privative opposition that I have come across. I suspect he is an excellent teacher. It is not my intention that this comment be taken as an attack on his credibility as a scholar.

limitation (Vinogradov), result (Mazon) and totality (Maslov, Isacenko, Bondarko, Rassudova, Comrie).[12] Some combine more than one feature. Forsyth, for example, takes Maslov's "totality" and adds to it his own "juncture" to produce what is perhaps the most useful current formula:

> A perfective verb expresses the action as a total event summed up with reference to a single specific juncture.[13]

Launer comments that "Pedagogically, 'limitation' is a useful term and, given careful explanation, may be used as a kind of shorthand" for Forsyth's totality plus juncture,[14] which he considers to be "the best available definition" as of the beginning of his article.[15] He, of course, is determined that by the end of his article Forsyth will have been superseded, and so he adds yet another feature, "inference",[16] vaguely reminiscent of Mazon's "result". This makes three features in all, which seems to cause Launer to overload: while adding his "inference" he manages to lose track of Forsyth's "totality", and so ends up with two, "juncture" and "inference".[17]

In the discussion of what "meaning A" is, much energy is expended tilting at others' definitions thereof, which are inevitably found to be "inadequate". Comrie, for

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[12] See Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 5-6; Comrie, Aspect, 3, 16; Forsyth, Grammar, 8, note 3 (on Mazon); and Hulanicki, "The Actional Perfect in Russian", 174, and 182, notes 4-6 for references to the others.
[13] Forsyth, Grammar, 8.
[14] Launer, "Can Aspect Be Taught?", I, 31.
[15] Launer, "Can Aspect Be Taught?", I, 22.
[16] Launer, "Can Aspect Be Taught?", II, 8-17.
[17] See Hulanicki, "O nekotoryx slucajax", 23-4. The overload occurs somewhere between II, 9 and II, 14.

example, begins his discussion of "perfective" with this lofty declaration: :

> Before illustrating in more detail what is meant by perfectivity, it may be worth discussing briefly some frequently cited, but essentially inadequate characteristics of this notion: many of these are quite widespread in the general linguistic literature on aspect . . . .''

This "brief discussion" lasts four pages and attempts to cast down all the major proposals except, of course, totality, the one he accepts. Short duration, limitation, punctuality, completion, result: each is fired upon in turn. The "detail" on what perfectivity is covers only three pages, some of it more negatives.

Forsyth's definition of "totality-plus" is attacked from both sides: by Launer, as we have seen, who wants to put a tail on it, and by Hulanicki, who seeks to peel off juncture and get back to unembellished Maslovian totality.''

Whatever the relative merits of these various attempts to pin down the elusive "meaning A", each of them covers a wide swath of aspect usage and proves itself useful in a variety of contexts, whatever examples may be adduced against it. For the moment it would seem like the better part of valour not to take the field in this contest of titans, but rather to say with Vinogradov that "the theory of Russian verbal aspect is one of the most difficult, controversial and poorly researched (nerazrabotannye) areas of Russian grammar" and "Russian grammarians have so far

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''Comrie, Aspect, 16.
''Hulanicki, "O nekotoryx slucajax", 23.

been unable to find the principal distinction which divides the Russian verb into two equal parts".'[10]

F. Aspect in Russian and English

A completely different approach to Russian aspect, with obvious pedagogical applications, is to compare it to English "aspect". Attempts to draw this comparison can be instructive, but inevitably take as their point of departure some rather arbitrary decisions as to what constitutes "aspect" in English, since it is not marked by a neat morphologically-based pair system hallowed by traditional recognition as is the case in Russian. For example, Holden'[11] carefully lists the multifarious English active indicative verb forms and outlines their functions,'[12] then groups and compares them in four categories: simple, "expanded" (progressive in traditional labelling), perfect and perfect expanded (perfect progressive).'[13]

But then comes the leap of faith: the progressive-simple opposition is "aspect", the perfect-simple another category called "temporal relationship".'[14] While obviously perfect and progressive must be assigned to different categories since they can

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'[10]Vinogradov, 379, 391. Although this was written years ago, it has not lost its pertinence today.
'[11]A Contrastive Study of the Russian and English Aspectual Categories, MS, University of Alberta: 1965.
'[12]Holden, Study, 25-40.
'[13]Holden, Study, 41-51.
'[14]Holden, Study, 51.

co-occur in one verb,''[15] it is less obvious that either one of them alone should be put with simple and called the English aspect category. What of the other one? What of "used to"? What of all those phrasal verbs such as "eat up" and "drive off" (with a whip or in a car)? It is also not self-evident that if one of them is to be so styled, that one should be the progressive.''[16]

Holden, though, does not discuss these issues.''[17] He goes on to compare in detail the aspect categories in English and Russian. Ultimately he points out, quite correctly providing we accept his scheme for English aspect, that the marked Russian perfective translates as English "simple aspect" (that is, simple or perfect); marked English "temporary aspect" (progressive and perfect progressive) translates as Russian imperfective; and Russian imperfective and English "simple" translate each other for situations which are outside the marked zone of both languages. This

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''Even this may not be so obvious. At least it is not to Comrie, who talks of the perfect as being "combinable with other aspectual categories" (Aspect, 52, note 1).

''Comrie includes the perfect in his treatment of aspect, and notes that regarding it as an aspect is traditional (Aspect, 6, 52, 124), although he states early on that it is doubtful that the perfect is an aspect according to his own definition (6), and alludes to doubts entertained by many as to the validity of tradition on this point (52). Cf. also Bondarko, "K problematike funkcional'no – semanticeskix kategorij", 27, who in his discussion of the relationship between tense and aspect classes the perfect (along with the aorist) as expressing a hybrid "aspectual-temporal" meaning.

''To be fair it should be added first, that if one is to tack the label "aspect" on anything in English, the progressive would seem to be the best candidate, although this labelling is somewhat arbitrary, and second, that regardless of what one thinks of the choice of labels, the pigeon-holes remain valid.

is an observation of considerable pertinence and usefulness, although it leaves much unsaid, particularly in the large third category.

A great deal of scholarly water has gone under the aspectological bridge since the carefree days of the mid-sixties when no one had ever heard of Forsyth, Comrie, Rassudova, and a host of others. Yet Swan at the beginning of his article "The Mystery of the 'Imperfective-Completive'" makes essentially the same observation with a somewhat different theoretical structure and set of labels. For him, Russian and English "share the same system"[1] so far as aspect meaning is concerned. There are three elements: "completive" (which he identifies with Forsyth's and Bondarko's "totality"),[2] habitual, and progressive (Holden's "temporary"). Russian marks the first and English the last. Swan rather fancifully considers that Russian verbs of motion have a form for each; according to him, indeterminate (xodit') is habitual, determinate (idti) is progressive, and perfective (pojti) is completive. This claim seems gratuitous.

For the imperfective verbs, of the four mappings being made (ind:hab, hab:ind, det:prog, prog:det) not one seems correct. Consider the following examples:

ind:not hab
On xodil v teatr vcera vecerom.
hab:not ind
On kazdyj den' edet v Kreml' na avtobuse i potom vozvrascaetsja domoj peskom.

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[1] Swan, "Mystery", 517.
[2] Swan, "Mystery", 523.

det:not prog
Segodnja vecerom ja idu v universitet.
prog:not det
On sejcas xodit po parku
so svoim rucnym tarantulom.

As to the perfective, how pojti can be described as "completive" is totally obscure to me. For example, the sentence On posel v magazin generally means that he is on the road coming or going or at the store. All that it really indicates is that he has changed state, has gone from "static" to "dynamic" with respect to his trip to the store, has crossed the juncture in Forsythian terms, is "off". Another use of the perfective – poslil – does not even indicate this. It simply urges that dynamism be moved into, or declares that it is now beginning (Nakonec-to poslil). This is admittedly a special case, but a very common one.

A piquant note is added by Swan: "The explicit identification of "determinate" with progressive aspectuality and "indeterminate" with habitual aspectuality is difficult to find anywhere in either the professional or practical literature (outside of Swan [1973])."** To which one can only say, "And with good reason."

While not wishing to exclude the possibility that further insights may yet come from this cross-language comparative approach, nor deny its usefulness and indeed its virtual inevitability for adult learners of Russian, it seems unlikely that it will ever do more than reveal Russian aspect in a general, limited way. The same can be said for

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**Swan, "Mystery", 524, note 5.

the ongoing attempts to isolate the mystery "meaning A" which is marked by the perfective, examined in the previous section. Likely all students of Russian go through a stage of dreaming of and searching for a cross-language formula or a neat definition of aspect which will waft them through the portals of perfectivity into the New Moscow of "near-native competence", and linguists dream of taking the world of aspectology by storm with their next monograph. But all are eventually brought low. The students sadly conclude that there is nothing for it but to assimilate the specifics of the system one by one, and return to their grammars and manuals. The linguists resign themselves to chipping away at the fortress walls rather than carrying all before them in one mighty blast. It is to some of these specifics, some of these stones in the wall, and to their relationship to the concept of transitivity, that we now turn.

III. TRANSITIVITY AND ASPECT

A. Transitivity Defined

The concept of transitivity which shall govern this investigation of transitivity and aspect is the one presented by Paul J. Hopper and Sandra Thompson in their long and quite interesting article "Transitivity in Grammar and Discourse". The definition of transitivity used in this article is different from the traditional one. The traditional notion of transitivity is connected with the presence of a surface direct object. Thus a "transitive verb" is one which takes such an object. Hopper and Thompson immediately set themselves apart from this traditional view by saying that "Transitivity has a number of components, only one of which is the presence of an object of the verb."[1] They are nevertheless not as far from the traditional view as might be at first supposed. While the presence of an object is the most readily visible sign of transitivity and hence is the focus of its traditional treatment, at bottom the concept is not exclusively or even primarily concerned with the object alone. The presence of an object means that the sentence now has two participants, a subject, either explicit or

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[1]Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 251, abstract.

implicit,[1] and an object; further there typically is a transfer, a "motion across" from one to the other, a key concept which is implicit in the very word transitivity.

Thus transitivity is seen to involve not only the object, but the whole clause, and more precisely a transfer from subject to object. This concept is, in itself, nothing new. The very expression "transitive verb" shows clearly that transitivity in the traditional view is not associated with the object alone even if it is the object that is focused on as its defining characteristic. The participation of the subject, the idea that it is doing something to the object, affecting the object in some way when conditions of transitivity exist, is also very much a part of the traditional treatment. As Hopper and Thompson state,

> Transitivity is traditionally understood as a global property of an entire clause, such that an activity is 'carried-over' or 'transferred' from an agent to a patient. Transitivity in the traditional view thus necessarily involves at least two participants . . . and an action which is typically effective in some way. This intuitive understanding is the one which we shall attempt to characterize explicitly and in universal terms.[2]

The way in which Hopper and Thompson choose to make transitivity explicit is the key to their treatment of it and to the difference between their treatment and the

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[1]In some cases the subject is strictly formal ("It is raining", etc.), or even vanishes altogether on the surface, as in a type of Russian sentence describing what in English would be called "acts of God": Vcera zalilo polja. The transformationalists of course see a subject in the deep structure here, but I have not sounded these depths.
[2]Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 251.

traditional one. For Hopper and Thompson, the transfer which is central to the notion of transitivity does not just occur, it can be quantified, and the various component factors which encourage or discourage it can be analysed. The degree to which a given sentence displays factors favourable to the transfer, which is obviously linked to the effectiveness with which it occurs, enables us to speak of the sentence as higher or lower in transitivity. The authors sum up their approach and how it arises out of the traditional notion of transitivity as follows:

> Transitivity, then, viewed in the most conventional and traditional way possible – as a matter of carrying-over or transferring an action from one participant to another – can be broken down into its component parts, each focusing on a different facet of this carrying-over in a different part of the clause. Taken together, they allow clauses to be characterized as more or less Transitive: the more features a clause has in the 'high' column . . . the more Transitive it is – the closer it is to cardinal Transitivity.''

The authors next list their parameters for transitivity, giving under each of them the poles of high and low transitivity respectively.'' These are:''

(1) Participants (two or more, A (Agent) and O (Object), versus one);

(2) Kinesis (action/non-action);

(3) Aspect (telic/atelic);

(4) Punctuality;

(5) Volitionality;

''Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 253.
''Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 252.
''For parameters 4-6 and 10, the high pole is the same as the name of the parameter, the low pole its negation.

(6) Affirmation;

(7) Mode (realis/irrealis);

(8) Agency (A's potency high/low);

(9) Affectedness of O (total/none); and

(10) Individuation of O.

That these factors are related to each other and that this relationship can be described in terms of transitivity, in which they all participate, is confirmed by the fact that they co-vary with each other and that they often are marked by the same morphosyntactic signals as those that mark traditional transitivity.'' By co-variation of transitivity features the authors mean that "whenever an obligatory pairing of two Transitivity features occurs in the morphosyntax or semantics of a clause, the paired features are always on the same side of the high-low transitivity scale."''

With this concept of, and approach to, transitivity in view, we now turn to an examination of how it is related to aspect.

B. Aspect as Transitivity-Linked

The obvious starting point for a discussion of the link between aspect and transitivity is to note that Hopper and Thompson themselves list it as one of their ten parameters

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''Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 254-5, 279.

''Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 254. Italics the authors'. The authors call this the Transitivity Hypothesis and state it formally, 255. The bulk of the rest of the article consists of evidence in support of it.

of transitivity. It will not, however, have escaped the reader's attention that their concept of it apparently differs somewhat from what would be appropriate to the Slavic languages in general and Russian in particular, since they give as its defining polarity telic:atelic.'' We shall see that these concepts interact quite closely with aspect in Russian, but no Slavicist would give them as the primary content of that category. Rather they would be classified as an Aktionsart. Because of the fact that the authors are dealing with a large number of unrelated languages, their concept of aspect is characterized by a certain fluidity which from a Slavicist's point of view can seem like a lack of clarity. Although in the initial presentation of their parameters aspect is defined in terms of telicity, they explain later on that both telicity and perfectivity are included within it. "Up to this point we have used the terminology 'telic/atelic' and 'perfective/imperfective' interchangeably. To a large extent, the choice of terms is dictated by the amount of descriptive material available on this question in a given language".'' Later, in their discussion of aspect, they switch to talking of aspect in terms of perfectivity, "which is broader and therefore safer".''

Having made this change in labels, the perfective is

''"Telic", from the Greek "telos" (end) means end-oriented. Its meaning is discussed further below under "Semantic Categories".

''Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 270.

''Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 271.

then identified as high in transitivity and the imperfective as low.

> Aspect is systematically correlated with the degree of Transitivity of the verb: if the Aspect is perfective, the interpretation – other things being equal – has properties allowing the clause to be classified as more transitive; but if the Aspect is imperfective, the clause can be shown on independent grounds to be less transitive.''

This relationship has also been noted by Russian aspectologists. Rassudova, for example, comments that "A perfective verb is usually perceived by the speaker and the listener as closely identified (v tesnom edinstve) with the object or other words dependent on the verb, whereas an imperfective verb more often detaches itself (vyclenjaetsja) from the statement."'' She adds in a footnote that the degree to which this is or is not the case is highly dependent on intonation, but wisely declines, as we also shall do, to become distracted by a discussion of that complex subject. Forsyth points out that a perfective verb without an object is often meaningless. One can say vcera ja pisal, but not vcera ja napisal, unless there is reference to an implied object which has just been mentioned by the speaker or his interlocutor, as is often the case in conversation.'' Swan says that when an event has a simple result, effect, outcome, or accomplishment "and, especially when logical stress falls on the direct object, the

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''Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 271.
''Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 20-21.
''Forsyth, Grammar, 91.

perfective is used."[98] A parallel phenomenon is the shift from perfective to imperfective which frequently occurs when attention is redirected from the direct object to something else, as in Postroili dom. A gde stroili?[99] Forsyth notes that for sentences in the past tense, "there exists a general correlation between transitivity . . . and perfective aspectuality."[100] The perfective is used "where there is relatively more emphasis on the object of the verb".[101] The antipode of this is the "use of the imperfective in predicates with neutral aspectuality[102] and reduced transitivity, such as 'kto sevodnja ubiral komnatu?'."[103]

The above comments on the correlation between use of the perfective aspect and high transitivity not only point to the likelihood of such a relationship, they also connect it with the role of the verb in the context of the communicative situation as a whole, that is, what linguists refer to as discourse. Hopper and Thompson regard transitivity, too, as discourse-connected, and devote the last third of their article to discussing this connection with discourse.[104] The connection between aspect choice and discourse will be examined in the next section.

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[98]Swan, 518.
[99]Swan, 521.
[100]Forsyth, Grammar, 91.
[101]Forsyth, Grammar, 91.
[102]This corresponds to what we have referred to as "non-contextually marked" use of the imperfective, what Spagis called "non-aspectual" imperfective meaning. See "Aspect as a Privative Opposition" above.
[103]Forsyth, Grammar, 91.
[104]Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 280-94.

C. Discourse

In their attempt to find a reason for the universality of morphosyntactic structures reflecting transitivity, Hopper and Thompson turn to discourse, and more specifically grounding, that is, foregrounding and backgrounding. Linguistic communication aims at achieving some goal for the speaker (user) and proceeds on the basis of assumptions as to what the needs and prior knowledge of the listener (recipient) are. Some of what is said will be more relevant in terms of the speaker's goals and assumptions than the rest. This is the basis of distinctions in grounding. The main points, those that are seen as most relevant and most useful to the speaker, make up the foreground. The background, on the other hand, assists and comments on the foreground.

Hopper and Thompson note a close correlation between grounding and transitivity. This is reflected both by a striking difference in the average number of transitivity features in a foregrounded clause as opposed to those in a backgrounded clause (8.0 versus 4.1),[102] and even more strongly by the fact that for each individual transitivity feature, occurrence was more common in foregrounded than in

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[102]Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 284. This statistic is based on Hopper and Thompson's own study of three narrative texts in English.

backgrounded clauses.[103]

Aspect, of course, is one of these features. But even before they get into the feature-by-feature discussion, the authors note a connection between aspect and grounding. They point out that "numerous languages have morphological and syntactic devices which reflect grounding",[104] and that a very common one "is a two-fold set of verb paradigms denoting 'completed action' vs. 'non-completed action'."[105] In the feature-by-feature discussion, the authors suggest the reason for this connection.

> Foregrounded clauses typically recount sequences of events which mimic the chronological order of those events, as they are supposed to have occurred. Each event in foregrounding is thus viewed in its entirety; from the viewpoint of the discourse, it is bounded at its beginning by the termination of the preceding event, and at its end by the initiation of the next event. The discourse thus imposes a perfective interpretation on foregrounded events. . . . In backgrounding, however, events and situations are not bounded by the discourse: they are presented as ongoing, or repeated, or simultaneous with foregrounded events.[106]

In the initial discussion of discourse, the authors analyse texts and cite sources dealing with grounding in narrative contexts, while at the same time applying their conclusions to language generally.[107] This constant alternation leads the reader either to diagnose low-grade scholarly schizophrenia or to conclude that the speech act

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[103]Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 284-8.
[104]Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 281.
[105]Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 283.
[106]Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 286.
[107]Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 280-2. They use phrases such as "any speaking situation", "discourse", "linguistic features", and so on.

is being viewed as essentially narrative, although this is nowhere stated. Later in the discussion, the dependence of the analysis on narrative contexts is acknowledged, but an attempt is made to extend the validity of the conclusions to other forms of discourse on the rather flimsy basis of two examples and some doubtful logic.[100] But accepting for the moment the narrative context provided by the authors, we can restate their view of discourse in geometrical terms as follows: foregrounded events are a series of lines with discrete boundaries running horizontally and arranged in chronological order. Backgrounded events, on the other hand, are lines without sharp starting or ending points arranged below the row of foregrounded events. Some are strung out vertically below a particular foregrounded event, providing background detail on it; others are not mapped onto any particular event in the foreground row but refer to the situation as a whole. They float somewhere below the others. The perfective is particularly appropriate to the presentation of events that are foregrounded, as they are seen as distinct wholes set off from what precedes and

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[100]Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 282-3. "Most of the work in [the study of grounding phenomena] has been concerned with narrative, and our own studies are no exception." After a single example, from colloquial Chinese Indonesian (a choice clearly dictated by the need to establish universality as convincingly as possible), of "conversational grounding" marked in the same way as "narrative grounding", they argue that "it is reasonable to assume" that narrative grounding is a mere extension of "the more pervasive conversational genre". Their second example is a recipe. But there are obvious parallels between narration (describing a sequence of events) and instructions (ordering a sequence of events).

follows them. It is uniquely capable of moving the narrative forward, of presenting new information in an attention-getting way. Forsyth is speaking of essentially the same thing when he discusses the "syntactic-expressional balance" of the sentence. He compares aspect use in two contexts: Pozvonili iz obkoma. Vyzyval Blikin and Èto verno. A pisatel' vyzval? – Vyzval.[110] The difference between the two, he says, is that the second

> . . . introduces the action as a new topic. . . . The sentence Vyzyval Blikin, however, follows a statement of the new information that the telephone has rung. The nature of the action is clear, and all the emphasis falls upon the identity of the subject, which is the new information presented by this sentence.[111]

In grounding terms, the verb in the second example is foregrounded: the sentence containing it presents a new step in an unfolding narrative, moves us forward along the time line. In the first example, the sentence containing vyzyval is backgrounded: its purpose is to comment and to elaborate on the sentence that immediately preceded it. It does not move us forward along the horizontal foreground row, but rather presents itself as a second line positioned under the line in the top row representing the first sentence.

But the scheme given above does not adequately describe all communication situations. What if the speaker is engaged in a fact-finding question-and-answer type exchange in an effort to find out whether or not a set of events, which he postulates, did in fact occur or not? Rassudova

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[110]Forsyth, Grammar, 85, 88.
[111]Forsyth, Grammar, 85.

presents just such an exchange. The scene is a cross-examination. In outline, the exchange is as follows:

> Net puli.
> Kak tak net? Vy ee dostavali ili ne dostavali?
> Scitaj, cto ne dostaval.
> Prinosili ili ne prinosili?
> Prinosil.
> Vy, kak soobscil sledstviju Dudyrev,
> i emu pokazyvali?
> Pokazyval i emu.[111]

It would be pointless to say that new information is not being presented here and in other linguistic situations similar to this one, or that this new information is not the main point of the discourse. In fact, every imperfective verb here is either soliciting or providing new information. In geometrical terms, what we have is a series of lines arranged vertically, outside the chronologically-sequential horizontal top row used to present narration, and this vertical series is in this situation the axis of discourse. Here there is possibly no horizontal line at all: narration may be possible only after the facts are in, or it may simply not be the point. Another possibility is that there already is a horizontal line known to all which gives a chronological framework into which the facts can be fitted. But this extract does not present it and is not concerned with it. If it exists at all, it is "on hold", so to speak. The participants in this conversation are preoccupied with sketching in lines below it. Rassudova herself characterizes this extract as follows: "The prosecutor's questions are an attempt to reconstruct a picture of the

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[111]Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 23.

past, to clarify what facts took place then; thus the use of the imperfective."[112]

It is noteworthy that in this passage it is the single perfective that presents information which is already known. The audience is reminded that Dudyrev informed the court of something. As Rassudova says, "the prosecutor notes a fact known to the court and established as of the moment of speech."[113] This reminder provides a background to the next fact-finding imperfective question, which as a result now takes on a nuance of "Is that the way it really happened?" This single perfective soobscil is like a little splice from a narrative, the narrative of what has gone on in court to that point, which could be extended if it was desired to do so. The other imperfective verbs are like lights switched on or off on a board. As has been mentioned, they are not arranged chronologically by virtue of their presentation here in the imperfective. In this situation, it is possible that the events to which they refer are, in fact, in the same chronological order as the order of their presentation in the exchange: the witness got the bullet, brought it, then showed it to Dudyrev. But it is just as possible that the showing took place before the bringing. In any case, this extract tells us nothing about this aspect of the situation it is exploring. We can assume, of course, that the getting preceded the bringing, but only because the logic of the meanings of the verbs makes any other

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[112]Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 23.
[113]Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 23.

interpretation absurd.

Communicative Direction and Aspect

What significance does this fact-finding discourse have for Hopper and Thompson's ideas on the relationship of discourse and grounding to the choice of aspect? Rassudova shares their view of the importance of the speaker's goals for this choice. "The communicative tasks of the speaker should be recognized as the basic speech factor influencing the use of verbs of different aspects."[114] But her scheme for describing the relationship between the two is somewhat different. The clearest presentation of this scheme is to be found in an article she devoted to the subject, "Vybor vida glagola i kommunikativnaja napravlennost' predlozenija",[115] linking aspect choice to what she calls the "communicative direction" of the sentence. If the verb is not at the centre of attention,[116] the result is either a semantic rapprochement of the two aspects allowing a virtually free choice between them[117] or a tendency to use

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[114]Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 10.
[115]All the elements of this scheme are also present in Upotreblenie vidov, but they are not presented together as part of a scheme.
[116]See Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 37-44. The distinction made here between being at or outside the centre of attention is central for the elaboration of various theories of functional sentence perspective (aktual'noe clenenie). It is called by various names, including high and low focus, topic and comment, theme and reme, and new and old information.
[117]Rassudova, Vybor, 21.

the imperfective as the unmarked member of the aspect pair.[118]

Examples of the first case[119] include Vse èto ja znaju, vy ze sami mne èto i rasskazyvali (rasskazali). Gde ty kupil (pokupal) zimnee pal'to? Kogda vy kupili (pokupali) svoju mebel'?[120] Forsyth acknowledges the existence of cases of rapprochement of aspect meaning, and explains them by saying that "the aspect is of secondary importance, since all that the speaker is concerned with is whether or not the action has taken place." But he regards them as rare and refers to their "apparent perversity".[121] While it is unquestionably correct that there is greater freedom of aspect choice under conditions of lowered attention to the verb, it would seem that there still is a subtle difference in emphasis, the imperfective being the more "modest" of the two choices, encouraging even greater concentration on the rest of the sentence. This is confirmed by the fact that Rassudova in Upotreblenie vidov presents the imperfective first in the section dealing with situations characterized by low attention to the verb, adding that use of the perfective is also possible.[122] The second case, a tendency to prefer the imperfective, is seen by Forsyth as the

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[118]Rassudova, Vybor, 22.
[119]From Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 40.
[120]Not all verbs can function in this way. This is discussed later in this section.
[121]Forsyth, Grammar, 90.
[122]Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 40.

general case. He calls it the "imperfective as unstressed copula".[123] Rassudova does not comment on the relative frequency of her two cases, but does note that the second is especially likely to appear under certain specific circumstances. For example, when the context indicates processal meaning or what she calls "disconnection with the moment of speech" the imperfective is "compulsory".[124] It also appears "particularly often" when the action itself is not just already known to the speaker and listener but has been mentioned. Examples:

Ja uznal . . .
A gde vy uznavali?

Mne ob"jasnili . . .
Kto že vam ob"jasnjal?[125]

Rassudova notes in reference to the last example (and the remark is just as pertinent to the first one) that there is a "switching of attention" operating here.[126] The switch is from the event given by the first speaker to further detail on some particular non-aspectual facet of it as requested by the second speaker. In Hopper-Thompsonian terms this means that the verb is shifted from the foreground to the background. Rassudova also notes that when this sort of shift occurs, the second imperfective verb is usually shorn of its complements. This is strictly speaking not correct. But Rassudova here is writing for a popular audience and

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[123]Forsyth, Grammar, 84-87.
[124]Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 40.
[125]Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 40
[126]Cf. Swan, 521, who calls it "redirection".

allows herself this imprecision of language. What she obviously means is "all but the foregrounded complement" (in these examples, gde and kto). This makes sense, as their presence would tend to make the verb more specific in the mind of the listener, would tend to draw attention back to the verb. In transitivity terms, this absence of extraneous complements isolates the verb and prevents a sense of motion across it from developing. This, then, is Rassudova's view of aspect choice when the verb is not at the centre of attention.

The second possibility is that the verb is at the centre of attention. Here Rassudova distinguishes two possibilities dependent on what the "communicative direction" of the sentence is. If the speaker's intent is to tell what action occurred in a given situation, that is, to answer the question "What happened?", he normally chooses the perfective.[12'] It can be noted immediately that this case corresponds perfectly to Hopper and Thompson's narrative foregrounding. But Rassudova further observes that if the imperfective is used in such contexts, a process or extended action meaning is usually indicated.[12"] If, on the other hand, the speaker's intent is to communicate whether or not a certain action took place, that is, to answer the question "Was there action X or not?", he

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[12']Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 11; Rassudova, "Vybor", 22-3.

[12"]Rassudova, "Vybor", 24. Rassudova in this article is concerned with single-action situations only (21). Were this not the case, other imperfective meanings would also be possible.

normally chooses the imperfective.[129] This is the case in, for example, what I have called "fact-finding" speech situations such as the trial scene which has already been analysed above.

Rassudova's scheme has two broad categories: the verb outside the centre of attention and the verb at the centre of attention. But there is another binary way of dividing Rassudova's information. We can consider whether or not the verb is relatively isolated. The verb can be isolated because it is not important, because the speaker's attention is focused elsewhere. This is the case for Rassudova's first broad category, the verb outside the centre of attention. But the verb is also isolated if it is the only thing that is important, or at least the thing of overriding importance. This is the case when the lexical meaning of the verb alone is "the story", the point of the sentence. Did it happen or not? Was there or was there not that action? These conditions will be recognized as corresponding to the second half of Rassudova's second broad category (the verb at the centre of attention). Both these types of verb isolation – the low road and the high road – are, as we have seen, characterized by normal use of the imperfective.[130]

The second possibility is that the verb, rather than being isolated, is relatively integrated. This is the case

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[129]Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 11; Rassudova, Vybor, 22.
[130]This analysis glosses over those cases where indifference to the aspect question leads to both aspects being used almost interchangeably, as noted above.

where it is connected with the rest of the sentence, goes together with it to present an event, to answer the question "What happened?" Here we are dealing with the first half of Rassudova's second broad category, the case where use of the perfective is normal. Rassudova explicitly mentions this greater unity of the sentence when the speaker's intent is to say what happened in her initial presentation of the subject: "The speaker's attention is directed not so much to the action itself as to the event as a whole."[131] Forsyth mentions it several times in his discussion explaining the use of the perfective in cases equivalent to Rassudova's:

> Logical emphasis is distributed over both verb and object, while the identity of the subject, being obvious, is not even expressed in words.
>
> Emphasis would fall equally on subject and predicate . . . .
>
> Once again the perfective is used in a statement in which all the elements of the situation are presented with almost equal force – the nature of the action, its result, and who carried it out.[132]

What is the connection between this division based on isolation of the verb and transitivity? Transitivity by its very essence involves interconnecting the different members of the sentence, because it concerns a flow through the sentence, a transfer from subject through verb to object. The perfective with its connotations of completion, crossing

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[131] Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 11. Examples include razbit', slomat', uronit', zabyt'.

[132] See "Syntactic-expressional balance of the sentence", Forsyth, Grammar, 87-91. The quoted examples are from pages 88, 89 and 90.

of a juncture, result, etc., is especially able to present this dynamic, this transfer, and in so doing connects itself up to the other members of the sentence. But the isolation of the verb reduces these connections and impedes this flow. The verb now presents nothing but its lexical meaning. Verbs isolated in either a high or a low attention setting, and without contextual marking of some sort calling for one of the aspectual meanings which the imperfective can carry (Spagis's "aspectual meanings"), name the action qua action, the lexical meaning of the verb alone (Spagis's "non-aspectual" use).

Soviet linguists, including Rassudova, refer to this use of the imperfective as "general-factual". It is called "simple denotation" by Forsyth[133] and "constative general factual" by Comrie.[134] Swan comments that these specialists fail to note that this use "does not occur with all verbs, only with non-result verbs (including telic), where the imperfective is unmarked."[135] Swan's "result verbs" include Zeno Vendler's achievement verbs and some accomplishment verbs as well.[136]

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[133]See Forsyth, Grammar, 82-102.
[134]Comrie, Aspect, 113.
[135]Swan, "Mystery", 520.
[136]Vendler's original article setting out his semantic categories, "Verbs and Times", is to be found in Philosophical Review, 56 (1957), 143-60. Alexander Mourelatos summarizes the Vendler scheme at the beginning of his article, "Events, Processes, and States". Achievement verbs refer to the instantaneous start or culmination of an action, e.g. recognize, find, die. Accomplishment verbs have intrinsic duration, but are goal-directed, e.g. run a mile, grow up. Vendler's other two categories are activities (run, walk, push) and states (want, love,

He gives as examples kupit', vzjat' and zakazat'.[137]

First, it would seem that Swan is not completely correct in his claim. Since zakazat' is one of his result verbs, he seemingly refutes himself with the example Vy uze zakazyvali?,[138] until one realizes that he classes it as "retrospective", supposedly distinct from general-factual. But as Swan himself observes, what he calls retrospective "is never treated as a separate usage".[139] Forsyth has the same example, and calls it "simple denotation".[140] Comrie has Ja zakazyval borsc and calls it "general factual meaning".[141]

Second, Rassudova not only mentions this non-occurrence of the general-factual that Swan seems to think he has discovered, she defines it more precisely than he does.[142]

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[134](cont'd)dominate). Vendler's scheme is not without problems, some of which will be touched on below, but it is a good starting point for a discussion of different types of verbs and what they represent.

[137]Swan, "Mystery", 519. He contrasts "result verbs" to "non-result" (activity, habitual and stative) and "telic" verbs.

[138]Swan, "Mystery", 522.

[139]Swan, "Mystery", 122. Swan argues that it is semantically distinct because it is translated differently into English, but his argument here seems largely circular, as it is not clear what criteria define this "retrospective" category other than this difference in translation. He also links it up with Rassudova's phrase "disconnected from the moment of speech" (see Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 22-6), but Rassudova herself treats this as but a characteristic of general-factual. If it has any independent existence at all, it is only as the counterpoint the "perfect perfective", which itself appears in "appropriate contexts" (22).

[140]Forsyth, Grammar, 82.

[141]Comrie, Aspect, 122.

[142]Swan perhaps missed this because it is out of place in Rassudova's book. It is not in the first section (17-30) on the general-factual meaning, but instead in the section on

The general-factual meaning can appear, she says, when attention is directed to the place, time or doer (proizvoditel') of the action,[143] but it is hard to use the imperfective with verbs where it is difficult to conceive of the action as purposeful.[144] She adds to this "verbs like sozdat', otkryt', izobresti and so forth",[145] which she does not define, although they seem to be a subset of the Vendler achievement verbs.

It was stated above in the discussion of verb isolation and transitivity that when the verb was in a high-attention setting the use of the general-factual imperfective stemmed from the isolation of the verb. This isolation is, of course, not absolute. The verb has a subject and object, and the action is understood with reference to them. But it is the action and its consequences for the subject, the speaker or the listener, which are at the centre of attention, and not so much the flow of effect from subject to object and the effect on the object. For example, Ty cital etu knigu? is interested in whether or not the subject, ty, has done something (read that book), had an experience, picked up some knowledge, and not in whether the object has been affected by the action, and to what degree, whether some boundary in the reading has been crossed. This

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[143](cont'd)aspect use when attention is away from the verb (37-44).
[143]Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 40.
[144]". . . trudno predstavit', stoby zdes' imel mesto celenapravlennyj process." Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 39.
[145]Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 39.

explains why the perfective instead of the imperfective is normally used where English asks, "Have you read that book?", even although in most cases the question and answer both refer to, and are understood as referring to, the whole book.

Perfective and Imperfective Perfect and Transitivity

It is not without significance that English has the perfect where Russian has the imperfective in sentences like Ty cital étu knigu? The meaning of the perfect is, as Comrie says, "the continued present relevance of a past situation".[146] It is clear that the perfective can express such meanings, and this use of it is dealt with thoroughly by Forsyth and Rassudova and mentioned by Comrie.[147] Forsyth describes it thus:

> The new state of affairs produced by the event . . . remains unaltered, "in force" as it were, up till the moment of speaking, or at least until a point where the context makes it clear that a new action has altered these circumstances.[148]

It is noteworthy that many of these perfective perfects in Russian burst the wineskins of the English perfect. The perfective perfect can in fact be so strong that present relevance overshadows the past situation and the statement is felt more as a statement about the present than the past. There are a whole series of these perfect perfectives which

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[146]Comrie, Aspect, 52.
[147]Forsyth, Grammar, 74-8; Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 22-6; and Comrie, Aspect, 58.
[148]Forsyth, Grammar, 74.

translate the simple present in English.

I forget where he lives.	Ja zabyl, gde on zivet.
Do you understand?	Ponjali?
We're late.	My opozdali.
I'm tired.	Ja ustal.
I'm used to this.	Ja privyk k ėtomy.
I'm sick of it.	Ėto mne nadoelo.
He's crazy.	On s uma sosel.
How much money have you got left?	Skol'ko deneg ostalos' u tebja?

In contrast to the perfective perfect, the imperfective with perfect meaning seems to be in the realm of exotica. Forsyth and Rassudova are silent on it. In fact, Rassudova contrasts the perfect meaning of the perfective to the imperfective's "disconnection with the moment of speech".[144] Comrie, however, is more forthcoming. After noting that the perfective is often used to express perfect meaning, he adds, "However, the Russian Imperfective is by no means incompatible with perfect meaning. Some instances of the Imperfective allowing perfect meaning follow from the unmarkedness of the Russian Imperfective."[145]

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[144]Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 22-6. Her treatment includes some of what others, notably Hulanicki, treat as an imperfective perfect. But this apparent conflict is more one of semantics than of substance. In these cases what Rassudova means by "disconnection with the moment of speech" is that the immediate concrete result of the action is not present. But some connection can be, and is, present in context. See examples, 22-3. This is exactly what Hulanicki means by his "perfect of action" which he opposes to the perfective "perfect of state". Hulanicki's scheme is expounded in more detail below.

[145]Comrie, Aspect, 63. He adds "but not all", and cites the interesting example of a man who finds a friend resting with his house half-whitewashed. In English he could say, "I see you've been whitewashing the house." In Russian the high-transitivity Vy pobelili dom implies total affectedness of the object and is unusable here. The equivalent, expressing "a situation that has been interrupted but whose

Ty čital etu knigu? can be put in this category. It could be called a perfect of experience. Hulanicki explains Ja uže čital Annu Kareninu as meaning "At the present moment I am familiar with that work".[151] He calls it a "perfect of action" (perfekt dejstvija) as opposed to the "perfect of state" (perfekt sostojanija) expressed by perfective verbs which includes the idea of uninterrupted extension of a state from the moment of action to the moment of speech (e.g. otec umer), an idea which is not carried by the imperfectives.

Hulanicki's concept is presented together with some rather questionable logic.[152] He begins by pointing out that the analysis of aspect as a privative opposition views the marked member of the opposition (perfective) as having a certain semantic property A, which has been variously identified. He assures us that he will take no position on what A is, but later does so.[153] What he calls "the use of the imperfective in place of the perfective"[154] is simply what others call the general-factual meaning of the imperfective. He offers no proof that his label is justified, and it seems fairly clear that it is not. In a footnote to the sentence in which he makes this claim he scales it down a step to "the use of imperfective verbs to

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[150](cont'd)completed portion has present results", is simply Vy belite dom.
[151]Hulanicki, "O nekotoryx slucajax", 25.
[152]See Hulanicki, "The Actional Perfect in Russian".
[153]Hulanicki, "Actional Perfect", 175: "But the meaning of completion (meaning A) in the third example . . . ."
[154]Hulanicki, "Actional Perfect ", 174.

express completed actions".[155] This position he defends as follows:

> . . . the meaning of completion . . . in the third example[156] is surely expressed by the verb itself. Even if the context is reduced so as to eliminate items conveying information about the completion of the action other than the verb itself, thus Ja bral ètu knigu v biblioteke, the sentence still expresses the action as completed and in its totality.[157]

But this is only true if the assumed context arising out of the discussion to that point is allowed to continue in the reader's mind. If it is replaced by another, this completion and totality can be dissipated like dew in the sunshine of June:

> Kogda ty zvonil v moj kabinet, ja ne boltalsja v stolovoj. Ja bral ètu knigu v biblioteke. Sudar', za kogo vy menja prinimaete, v konce koncov?

In each case the completion and non-completion respectively of the taking of the book is clear. Thus the imperfective does not in itself "express" completed action, as Hulanicki says, but it does not exclude it either, and therefore it allows completed action to be expressed in a given context. This is essentially what Forsyth is saying when he speaks of "contextual meanings" none of which are "essential and inherent".[158] Hulanicki more or less gives the game away himself when he goes on to say, "This [expression of completion and totality] is especially clear when the sentence is part of a conversation", and goes on to give it

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[155]Hulanicki, "Actional Perfect", 182, note 7.
[156][Ja uze cital ètu knigu; ja bral ee v biblioteke]
[157]Hulanicki, "Actional Perfect", 175.
[158]Forsyth, Grammar, 15, and not 16, as Hulanicki indicates. His quotation from Forsyth on privative opposition is also misreferenced to 5 instead of 6.

once again a context which makes it unambiguous: Vy brali etu knigu v biblioteke? – Da, bral.[159] It would seem that the best description of Hulanicki's sentence and others like it is simply "the use of imperfective verbs in reference to completed actions".

But apart from these theoretical objections, Hulanicki's idea and discussion are quite useful in practical terms for understanding a whole area of imperfective usage. They seem particularly helpful in explaining the meaning of the imperfective forms of verbs of motion and reversible action, which could be subsumed under the general-factual meaning, but which are often treated separately because of the specific meaning they tend to take on.[160] Hulanicki compares the sentences Gde moja kniga? Kto ee vzjal? and Pocemu kniga takaja grjaznaja? Kto ee bral?[161] His explanation of them is as follows: The action in both cases is identical. The difference is that in the first case the state created by the action (the book being in someone else's possession) continues up to the moment of speech (perfect of state) whereas in the second case this state is broken off, although its effect is retained (perfect of action).

Hulanicki's approach can also be tied in with the idea of transitivity. To use the example just given, with the

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[159]Forsyth, Grammar, 15.
[160]E.g. Forsyth: "two-way action", Grammar, 78-81. Rassudova: "otkryvat'-otkryt' type verbs", Upotreblenie vidov, 27-9.
[161]Hulanicki, "O nekotoryx slucajax", 25.

perfective, the action (taking) still affects the object (book) in the most basic way: the book is not there. But with the imperfective, the remaining effect on the object is not the primary one of taking, that is, the absence of the object, but a secondary one: dirtiness. The book no longer abides in the "taken" state, but it retains some effects of having been in that state.

With the prefixed verbs of motion (priezzat', otkryvat', etc.) the perfective indicates that the moved object is still where the action indicated by the verb placed it, at least until a subsequent explicit indication to the contrary. Imperfectives do not indicate this. In transitivity terms, here too it is the perfective which indicates the continuation of the most immediate effect of the verb on the object.

Ja otkryl okno (and it is still open).
On priexal ko mne (and is still here).

But:

Ja otkryval okno.
On priezzal ko mne.

These last two sentences do not indicate that the window is still open or the person still my guest. They indicate only that for some reason the indicated events (opening of the window, his coming) are important to the speaker. Very often the imperfective will be used when the action has been reversed (i.e. the window shut, the guest departed) and together with a context can and do indicate this. Hulanicki says they "point . . . to the lack of

continuity of the state created by the actions (the window is most probably closed now; he has already left)."[162] The first part of this sentence seems misstated. The imperfective, true to its character as unmarked member of the aspectual pair, does not really point to this. But it leaves the door open – wide open – to it. Rassudova says that it "easily allows the idea of cancellation of the result of an action carried out in the past and replaced before the moment of speech by the opposite action."[163] Particularly with verbs which have exact antonyms, the contrast with the perfective (which presumably would have been used had there been no reversal) is at least a strong indication of reversal. Rassudova says, "The presence of an antonym is a very important factor for the development of the indicated meaning", and seemingly having realized this point herself, now states more strongly the meaning of the imperfective here: it "communicates (soobscaet o) a return to the original position".[164] Her examples are glossed without any allusion to possible ambiguity:

> Ko mne prixodil tovarisc – prisel i usel.
> Ja bral knigu v biblioteke – vzjal i sdal.
> My vkljucali svet – svet v moment reci ne gorit.[165]

Forsyth states the situation very well. In explaining a sentence with otkryval, he says that it implies that the window had been opened, then closed again. "Although one could not say that the imperfective verb otkryval explicitly

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[162]Hulanicki, "Actional Perfect", 179.
[163]Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 27.
[164]Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 28.
[165]Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 27-8.

expresses this sequence of events, nevertheless it clearly implies it because of its opposition to the unambiguous meaning of the perfective".[166] In transitivity terms, the perfective indicates the continuing primary effect of the verb's action. The imperfective does not; in fact, it strongly suggests the opposite.

Yet the imperfective does not exclude the non-reversal interpretation. Rassudova gives an example of the use of the imperfective with the window still open, but the attention (foregrounding) not on the window but on something else: Vy ne znaete, kto otkryval okno? Na podokonnike lezali moi bumagi, kuda-to ix perelozili.[167] The non-reversal imperfective is also evident in what one might dub the "imperfective of honourable lying" pointed out by Launer.[168] The following are possible statements by Masha's babushka to her boyfriend when he comes calling: a) Masa vysla. b) Masa vyxodila. If Masha is at home, a) is a lie and b) is what Launer calls a "white lie", actually, as he goes on to say, "the truth but not the whole truth."[169] To those of us with conveniently legalistic minds, it is not a lie at all. It is the truth, although admittedly deliberately misleading. What is important to note here, though, is that b) in this context can mean that Masha is

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[166]Forsyth, Grammar, 78.
[167]Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 38
[168]Launer, "Can Aspect Be Taught?", I, 29.
[169]A "white lie" is a lie which is innocuous to its hearer and has a noble purpose. What we have here is the opposite: the truth, but with intent to deceive and frustrate the hearer. It is clear that this is not the typical "Yes-Virginia – there-is-a-Santa-Claus" type white lie.

not at home. The usual meaning is not expected in this context. If Masha was at home, the boyfriend would expect to hear Masa doma or maybe even Zaxodite, pozalujsta. He has no interest in her having gone out if she is now at home. And thus the effectiveness of Babushka's ploy. But if b) meant unambiguously that Masha was home, there would be no point in saying it. It would have no capacity to mislead. The imperfective, being unmarked, does not communicate as clearly about the consequences of the action as does the perfective.

IV. ASPECT AND TRANSITIVITY FEATURES

Having seen in general terms how aspect is related to transitivity, and how this relationship is concretized within various different particular discourse contexts, we shall now outline the relationship of aspect to the transitivity features identified by Hopper and Thompson. For our purposes, these features (indicated in brackets after each group with Hopper and Thompson numbering) shall be grouped into three areas:

1. Participants (1. Participants 9. Affectedness of Object 10. Individuation of Object)
2. Semantic Categories (2. Kinesis 3. Aspect 4. Punctuality)
3. From Potential to Reality (5. Volitionality 6. Affirmation 7. Mode 8. Agency).

A. Participants

In transitivity terms, the primordial question which can be asked about a sentence is how many participants it has, and of what grammatical status. As discussed above, the presence of an object was the key traditional touchstone for deciding whether or not a sentence, or a verb, was transitive. It is therefore significant that it is often the case that where no object is present the use of the perfective is excluded or restricted. Thus, for example, while <u>On citaet knigu</u> easily becomes <u>On procital knigu</u>,

On citaet cannot become On procital unless both imply an object known to the participants in a speech act. Use of both forms with this implication is, of course, quite common in conversation, but this is irrelevant to their behaviour when used intransitively. There is another perfective form which can be used as the perfective of intransitive On citaet. This is On pocital. Here the perfective is one of time limitation, and thus it refers to something which is universal in the sense that it is present in any situation regardless of its transitivity. This form can also be used with an object: On pocital stat'ju o vidax i pocti srazu ze zasnul.

But the presence or absence of an object is not the only thing which is significant for the transitivity when this latter is understood as a flow or transfer of effect to the object. Hopper and Thompson also look at the affectedness and the individuation of the object. We have seen in detail above how the use of the perfective with an object indicates a more total, radical effect on the object. This is particularly clear in the case of the verbs of reversible motion, where the perfective and imperfective often behave as if they were members of a system of binary semantic opposition based on degree of affectedness of the object (or subject in the case of prefixed verbs of motion, but even here the phenomenon can be tied in with transitivity if an assumed object such as "the place" is attached to the sentence). But the relationship of aspect

to affectedness of the object is even more basic than this. While On cital knigu, Repin pisal etu kartinu and so forth do not exclude total affectedness of the object and in fact are often used in situations where the object is totally affected (general-factual meaning), it is also true that they allow the possibility of expressing non-total affectedness of the object, a possibility which is excluded by the perfective.[170]

The individuation of the object is related to transitivity because the more highly individuated an object is the more we are able to pin it down as having been affected. For example, a plural object can occupy a position which is semantically midway between a singular object and no object at all.[171] "Books" in "He is reading books" does not limit or define reading a great deal, and as a result the sentence is between "He is reading" and "He is reading a book" in transitivity terms. This has consequences for aspect too. On procital knigi is not impossible the way intransitive On procital is, but nor is it simply the perfective equivalent to On cital knigi, for it forces a more highly individuated interpretation of the object than is necessary in the imperfective sentence. It means "He read/has read the books". To say "He was

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[170]This is of course not the case with the so-called "attenuative" Aktionsart, usually with the prefix po-, where it is lexically specified that the perfective juncture is limited.

[171]This is no doubt profoundly disturbing to those among us with a penchant for mathematics who are almost certainly firmly convinced that 1 is between 2 and 0.

reading/read/has read books" the imperfective will be chosen.

Another form of individuation distinction is that which exists between objects which come in discrete units and those which do not, known as the count/mass or countable/uncountable distinction. Here again there is a connection with aspect use. The perfective is typically used when what is being expressed can be quantified, when the situation involves a definite quantum of action.[172] Ja vypil stakan vina and On procital desjat' stranic are typical examples. When the action is not quantified, the imperfective is typical: Vcera on cital v biblioteke. Mourelatos points out that perfective verbs when "transcribed" into nominalized expressions are countable whereas imperfectives are uncountable.[173] Thus "He swam" becomes "There was swimming by him", which is uncountable, whereas "He crossed the street" becomes "There was a crossing of the street by him", which is countable. Mourelatos gives no Russian examples, but they can easily be created: On perexodil cerez ulicu, byl perexod cerez ulicu; On peresel cerez ulicu, byl odin perexod cerez ulicu and so forth. This idea is quite elegant and is useful in making intuitive sense out of many of the characteristics of the two aspects such as the perfective's ability to express

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[172]I am indebted to my friend and scholarly comrade-in-arms (soratnik na naucnom poprisce) Victor Alperin for first drawing my attention to this felicitous characterization of a wide swath of perfective usage during one of our many conversations in Moscow.

[173]Mourelatos, "Events, Processes and States", 424-31.

limitation, crossing of threshold (Forsyth's juncture), a definite quantity of action, and the imperfective's ability to express the action without respect to bounds, in general, and so forth.

Another form of non-individuation of the object is the reflexive. In this case, it is not individuated from the subject. In sentences with reflexive verbs, an object is present formally, but because the object is not distinguished from the subject it tends to shrink in significance. Reflexive sentences occupy a midway position between one- and two-participant sentences, that is between "transitive" and "intransitive" sentences in traditional terms. In many languages, reflexivization is a frequently used device for "detransitivization". Transitive verbs are transformed into effectively intransitive verbs by the addition of the reflexive morpheme. Hopper and Thompson point out that this is the case in French and Russian, where they say "many inherently transitive verbs can be rendered intransitive by the addition of the reflexive morpheme".[117] Russian examples include otkryvat'/sja, nacinat'/sja, koncat'/sja, and poterjat'/sja, meaning the transitive and intransitive senses respectively of "open", "begin" or "start", and "end" or "finish", and for the last one "lose" and "get lost". From the aspect point of view, it is interesting to note that passivization, perhaps the most basic of all transformations, normally turns imperfective

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[117]Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 278.

verbs into reflexives whereas perfectives most often become byt' plus the past participle.

B. Semantic Categories

Kinesis

Hopper and Thompson's second transitivity feature is called kinesis, which is glossed as referring to the distinction between action and non-action verbs. The connection between kinesis and transitivity is not difficult to grasp intuitively: actions can be transferred, but not states, at least not unless "transferred" is given a quite non-intuitive meaning. Kinesis is also linked to affectedness of the object by this same fact. Consider the sentences "I hugged Sally" and "I liked Sally". In Russian they become Ja obnjal Salli and Ja ljubil Salli, Salli mne nravilas'. It will immediately be noticed that the perfective is used in the first sentence with high kinesis, whereas the imperfective is used in the second where kinesis is low. This situation is common, and follows from the nature of transitive active verbs as opposed to stative verbs. Comrie speaks of "the naturalness of the combination of stativity and imperfectivity"[177] which results from the fact that states by their very nature are ongoing, that is, they tend to continue unchanged unless something happens to

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[177]Comrie, Aspect, 51. See section "State and dynamic situation", 48-51.

change them.[176] Miller[177] gives the lack of a perfective as one of the basic criteria for stative verbs in Russian (491-2). Of course these verbs have related prefixed perfectives that are often paired with them and called their perfectives, but these perfectives have quite a different semantic relation to the base imperfectives than is the case with other verbs. They are ingressive, that is they indicate the beginning of the state, and not the situation as a whole as is usual with action verbs. On napisal pis'mo implies On bol'se ne piset pis'mo, but On ponjal knigu does not imply On bol'se ne ponimaet knigu: quite the contrary. Comrie affirms that states can be referred to perfectively

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[176]This sentence is cast objectively, but I do not wish to imply that the classification of situations as states or actions is entirely objective. The sentence can be reinterpreted subjectively as "Those situations are referred to as states which are regarded as ongoing by their very nature", etc.

[177]J. E. Miller, "Stative Verbs in Russian". Page references in the text are to this article. Miller lists the following examples: ponimat', verit', dumat', znat', ljubit', vladet', and nravit'sja. On page 497 he adds the sensory perception verbs videt' and slysat' to the list. The propriety of classifying such verbs as stative is contested by Mourelatos ("Events, Processes and States", 422) and intuitively it is hard to disagree with him that they differ from more conventional statives. But his grounds for objecting seem open to criticism. He gives "What happened next?" as a test for non-statives. But can one not imagine a narrative (likely involving small children in some of their less charming moments) in which the answer could be, "Benny wanted to go to the bathroom", "Benny wanted an ice cream cone", etc.? Mourelatos also objects that perfectives are needed to translate "I saw him cross the street" in French, Greek and Russian. In French he is right if one calls the passé composé perfective, a debatable point; about Greek I will not venture to comment. On Russian he is guilty of a howler, as his sentence in Russian can never be *Ja uvidel, kak on prosel cerez ulicu, but must be Ja videl, etc., although Ja uvidel, kak on proxodil cerez ulicu is all right, but that is another story.

since "the start or end of a state is dynamic".[170] If the start of a state is referred to, he is saying nothing different from what Miller is saying. However, he also gives two examples (with postojat' and prostojat') of perfectives referring "not only to the state, but also to its inception and termination". But this example is chosen from the group of verbs which one could designate "body position verbs"[171] which are somewhat idiosyncratic statives if indeed one chooses to regard them as statives at all. Miller calls them "static verbs", and notes that they fail to meet three out of his four criteria for statives in Russian (494). In addition to having perfectives, they cannot follow On zanjat tem, cto . . . and cannot be used with dative constructions.[172]

Before leaving the subject of stative verbs, it should be noted that even verbs which are classed as activity verbs can be used in ways which make them semantically very like stative verbs. Consider the sentences On citaet po-russki, On mnogo/casto citaet, On sejcas men'se citaet, cem ran'se.[173] With all of these sentences, there is a stative

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[170]Comrie, Aspect, 50.
[171]"Body" here is to be understood in the scientific sense, as these can also be used with inanimate objects.
[172]Hopper and Thompson note dative coding with verbs such as "like" and see in this a sign of low transitivity. Their example is from Spanish, but the same is true of French (plaire+dative) and Russian (nravit'sja komu-to). Miller's fourth test for stative verbs is that they cannot follow On . . . vmesto togo, ctoby . . . .
[173]The first sentence is to be taken as meaning "he can read Russian" and not "he is at the moment of speech reading something in Russian", which would more normally be On citaet na russkom jazyke in any case.

view being expressed. No reading activity is necessarily going on at the moment of speech. Rather a statement is being made about what the subject of the sentence is like or what he is capable of. Since we are dealing with an individual person, it is inappropriate to speak of "eternal verity", but there is quite clearly a kind of state. These sentences are easily rewritten with canonical stative verbs. The first could become On umeet citat' po-russki. The second is synonymous with the predicate adjective construction On citajuscij celovek. The third indicates a shift of states away from the kind of person indicated by the second sentence. It is significant to note that in these "stative" uses of activity verbs, even the perfective of time possible with intransitive activity verbs cannot be used. The pasts of these sentences cannot be constructed with pocital, but only with the imperfective.

Telic:Atelic

Hopper and Thompson's third transitivity feature is glossed in terms of telic/atelic, which are the poles defining another semantic category, telicity. "Telic", from the Greek telos meaning "end", is a term used to designate verbs or situations which contain within themselves, as part of their meaning, a goal (e.g. drown, read a book). These verbs and situations are linked to their goal either by intent on the part of the actor, or by a process leading normally (but not, as we shall see, inevitably) to a

terminus. Intent on the actor's part is by no means essential to telicity. For this reason it is perhaps clearer to use geometrical rather than psychological language and speak of "endpoint" rather than goal. Hopper and Thompson speak of "an action viewed from its endpoint"[183] and Comrie says that telic actions have a built-in terminal point where the action automatically comes to an end. Consider the telic situation described by "He's approaching the booby-trap". In this example, the absence of intent is clear enough, as long as we are able to assume the absence of suicidal tendencies in the subject. The fact that intent is not essential to the notion of telicity means, for example, that sentences like "He ran a mile" can be used to report the result of measurement of the distance run, even in the absence of any intention by the runner at the time to "run a mile". In other words, "He ran a mile" can be said even when it would not have been possible for him to say during the running "I am running a mile."

The endpoint which is the essential defining characteristic of telicity can be given by the lexical meaning of the verb itself (e.g. die, reach) or can arise out of the situation. Activity verbs which by themselves are atelic in that they do not progress towards any endpoint

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[183]Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 252. They use "telic" to mean completed telic actions and include incompleted telic actions under the heading "atelic". (Their example is "I am eating it".) In this respect their usage differs from that of others working with semantic categories, but the essential criterion of an endpoint is common to both.

function as telic when a goal is built onto them in the form of an object. Compare, for example, run/run a mile and read/read a book. This is a dramatic indication of the connection between telicity and transitivity. Transitive sentences with activity verbs are end-oriented whereas intransitive ones are not.

It would seem that telicity depends more fundamentally on the situation than on the verb. In fact, apparently almost all, if not all, verbs can be atelic or telic in some context.[113] Read is a typically atelic verb, but as we have just seen if an object is added – read a book – it becomes telic. But this is only the case if the object is individuated. An indefinite plural object read books leaves the situation atelic. There is an interesting parallel here with Mandarin Chinese, in which activity verbs are regularly followed by objects even in their atelic sense. Certain objects are paired with certain activity verbs for unmarked use as "filler" objects to complete the sentence structure when the verb is being used atelically. Or, to state the same thing from the Chinese point of view, English and Russian typically leave out the objects of atelic activity verbs when the identity of this object is not important. Thus the regular Mandarin equivalents of read, sing, talk and write are kan⁴ shu¹, chang⁴ ge¹, shuo¹ hua⁴ and xie³ zi⁴, literally "look at books", "sing songs", "speak words" and "write characters". For telic use, the object must be

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[113]Comrie, Aspect, 45-46.

"concretized" by the insertion before it of a liang⁴ ci² variously translated in English as quantity word or measure word, for example, kan⁴ yi ben³ shu⁴ for "read a book", literally "look at-one-LC-book",[184] which is comparable to the tendency in Russian to use the perfective with quantified objects. Just as read is a typically atelic verb, so drown (intransitive) is a typically telic verb.

But "Cats drown if you put them in deep water", an eternal verity, is atelic.[185] A characteristic of telic actions is that if a telic action is broken off before it reaches its endpoint, the action describable by the telic verb has not yet occurred. This is not the case with atelic situations. Thus if "John is singing" is broken off, we can still say "John has sung", whereas if "John is making a chair" is broken off we cannot say "John has made a chair."[186] The perfective functions in a way similar to the English perfect with respect to telic situations. If On delaet stol is broken off, one cannot say On sdelal stol. But Ivan sdelal stol puts you at the endpoint, eliminates

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[184]Comrie has several examples from Mandarin Chinese in his book. He makes only two errors that I was able to spot and which I now record for posterity: yi fen¹ xin⁴ for yi feng¹ xin⁴, "write-one-LC-letter" (82) and yuan² lai² ta¹ xie³ xin⁴ (82), which is not a correct sentence in Chinese. Also, yuan² lai² is incorrectly glossed as "formerly". It can mean "originally, at first", or can signal that information just acquired was previously unknown, a use very common in colloquial Chinese. This second use will often have a zero translation in English, but to make its meaning clear it could be glossed "Oh! so (you mean) . . .", "Oh, I see! . . .", "So . . . then" (especially British), etc. Adding zai⁴, a progressive indicator, before xie³ would make it correct: "Oh, so he's writing letters then."

[185]Comrie, Aspect, 45.

[186]Comrie, Aspect, 44-5. He makes this a test for telicity.

the possibility that you are in a telic situation which has not yet reached its endpoint. The imperfective, on the other hand, does not in and of itself tell you anything about whether or not the endpoint has been reached.[18] Here again we see that the perfective is associated with higher transitivity, with a more complete flow of effect from subject through verb to object. In the case of On sdelal stol, the chair has completely undergone the action of being made, but with On delal stol this is not necessarily so. However it should be noted that here it is not a question of the use or non-use of either aspect, but rather of the interpretation to be made of the telic situation. In many telic situations, there is no object and the telic endpoint operates with respect to the subject. The aspect choice then gives information about the degree to which the subject is affected in a way which is parallel to the information provided about the object in situations where the endpoint is relevant to it. An example, which vividly illustrates the nature of telic situations and the role of the endpoint and of aspect choice, is this sentence heard in a bus in Leningrad. The unexpressed subject of the sentence is an ice cream cone. Padaet . . . padaet . . . est'! Upalo! It is perhaps productive to consider cases like these as reflecting a deep structure in which the surface subject is the object. This would allow treatment of transitivity effects, notably affectedness of the object, to be applied

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[18]Comrie, Aspect, 46.

in a way parallel to that used with situations in which the surface object is affected.[188]

Different verbs and situations express different degrees of telicity, and at the upper end of the scale telicity blends into punctuality as the endpoint looms larger and larger and the process leading up to the endpoint is subordinated to it in significance or reduced to an insignificant stretch of time. Comrie tries to distinguish between "telic situations", where one can speak of the process leading up to the endpoint as well as the point itself and "achievement situations" which refer to the endpoint of the process only.[189] The achievement situations he regards as punctual.[190] But as we shall see, the distinction between them is not always clear.

Punctuality

What is the essence of the notion of punctuality? Hopper and Thompson define it as "no obvious transitional phase between inception and completion" of the action.[191] Comrie defines a punctual situation as one "that does not last in time (is not conceived of as lasting in time), one

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[188]Such treatment could also prove useful with the verbs of reversible motion examined above.
[189]Comrie, Aspect, 47. "Achievement" is Vendler's term. As was noted above, "achievements" are instantaneous whereas "accomplishments" (Comrie's "telic situations") intrinsically have duration. It is noteworthy that Anthony Kenny (Action, Emotion and Will [New York: 1963], ch. 8) grouped these two together as "performances".
[190]Comrie, Aspect, 43; 47, note 2.
[191]Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 252.

that takes place momentarily".[193] The relationship of this notion to aspect is clear: when an action is seen as a point, there is no possibility of seeing it as having internal structure. When the action occurs, a Forsythian juncture is crossed in one stroke. There is thus a natural tendency to prefer the perfective to express single punctual actions. Again the correlation between high transitivity and the perfective is upheld.

But is it possible to say just what a punctual action is? A point in geometry occupies no space. It is not possible, though, for an "action" in any usual sense to take up no time. Nevertheless, the time may be very short and as a result seen as negligible. This is the meaning of Comrie's parenthetical phrase. The concept of punctuality is essentially subjective, although it has an objective basis in time durations which are very short from a human point of view. However the dividing lines are not as clear as they once were. Even classic punctual actions such as "cough", marked in Russian by the perfective infix nu, can have their punctuality broken down through the wondrous operation of modern technology. A cough may be shown on film in slow motion, in which case it becomes possible to say, "And now the subject is coughing."

Having voluntarily relinquished cough as strictly punctual, Comrie tries to find verbs which could be called "logically punctual" and not just subjectively so. He

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[193]Comrie, Aspect, 42.

suggests "reach". However, his argument is not sustained convincingly.[1'''] Comrie states that "one cannot speak of the process leading up to John's reaching the summit by saying John is reaching the summit" and "we do not have *John was reaching the summit when he died." To this there can only be the following replies: "Oh, yes, one can!" and "Oh, yes, we do!" As long as the endpoint to which "reach the summit" refers is seen as being within grasp, the progressive is perfectly possible. This could perhaps be seen as a kind of metaphoric use of the progressive: a verb phrase which in the simple form refers to an endpoint only is used progressively to refer to the process leading up to that endpoint. In other words, the verb phrase is punctual in the simple form but telic in the progressive.

This approach also works well for die, a verb which Comrie sees as "less clear" than reach the summit, and for which he suggests creating a new category. Although die "refers to a punctual situation", he says, it is possible to say John is dying, which refers to the process before the endpoint and "might therefore seem to make die a telic verb." Indeed it might. Comrie tries to avoid this conclusion by claiming, again it would seem gratuitously, that "it seems odd to say ?John was dying, but the discovery of a new medicine led to his recovery." He sees here a contrast with Russian. "In Russian it is quite possible to say Kolja umiral (Ipfv.), no ne umer (Pfv.)". He concludes

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[1'''] See Comrie, Aspect, 47-8, which is the source of the citations which follow.

that if one is dying in English, death is inevitable,[1'4] whereas "umirat'/umeret' in Russian is telic, referring to the process leading up to death, whether or not death is reached." However, it is clear that this is true only of umirat'. There is no conceivable way that the perfective could refer to a process independent of a result. And second, it is not clear that there really is as significant a contrast between dying in English and dying in Russian as Comrie's analysis would lead us to believe.

But after circling about in confusion for this quite considerable time, Comrie finally does sight land, although he does not manage to bring his ship into harbour. He points out, with typical English understatement, that "Russian on ugovarival (Ipfv.) menja, no ne ugovoril (Pfv.) does not really translate into good English as 'he was persuading me but didn't persuade me'". This is putting it mildly, as the given "translation" is not only not good English, it strikes one as little better than gibberish. But the reason Comrie gives is not valid: "English persuade can only refer to the process leading up to the moment of persuasion if that process is in fact successful." Consider this situation:

> The girl beckoned, urging me to come with her. She was persuading me, but suddenly I remembered that I had an appointment with my supervisor who was eager to discuss with me the latest developments in the theory of aspect. My duty was clear: I turned away without another word.

[1'4]Or, as Comrie puts it, "once the process is under way the event cannot be prevented from occurring" (Aspect, 48).

To render this in Russian it will be necessary to say Ona menja ugovarivala i pocti ugovorila. Other similar English examples include: "I'm persuading you, aren't I? Or have I already persuaded you?", "I can see I'm persuading you", and so forth.

The key to the situation is that there is a wider difference in lexical meaning between the Russian perfective and imperfective than there is between the English simple (or perfect) and progressive. The Russian imperfective does not imply, as the English progressive does, that the process has been carried so far forward that the goal is in sight. The English progressive suggests that a little while longer will suffice to complete something which is now more or less inevitable barring the intervention of some totally new factor.[119] It is for this reason that Comrie's "was persuading, didn't persuade" is so disturbing. The progressive is felt to be close enough to the simple in meaning that when the latter is negated, then baldly juxtaposed with the former without a context allowing one to find one's feet and perch on the knife-edge of possible meaning which remains, the effect is positively vertiginous.

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[119]There are interesting English examples such as "Just a moment. I'm finding my glasses", which implies that the looked-for object will be found, is in the process of being found, which "look for" does not. An absent-minded professor who regularly had to look for his glasses every day but who always found them in a fairly short time could say such a thing. There is also the now slightly old-fashioned "I'm finding myself", ubiquitous in the 1960s and early 1970s, almost always an optimistic misstatement for "I am looking for myself", as rarely, if ever, did it lead to any finding.

But in Russian the imperfective covers a larger area of the semantic field. Thus the set of situations referred to by "She was persuading me" is a subset of those indicated by Ona ugovarivala menja, and equivalent to it only when this latter can have i pocti ugovorila added to it. Forsyth in his discussion of "conation"[1''] states the same thing from a different point of view, pointing to the part of the semantic field of ugovarivat' which is not a subset of that of "to be persuading" and which must therefore be translated differently.

> The imperfective may express so strongly a conscious attempt to perform the action that it may in some contexts require a different translation equivalent from that of the perfective past tense.

Thus Ja ego ugovarival, if the persuasion process does not reach the brink of success, will be "I tried to persuade him" in English.[1'']

In transitivity terms, both the English and Russian have reduced transitivity with the imperfective and progressive respectively, but in Russian the reduction is greater. No effect at all must be present. It is enough that a process has been engaged which is known to produce this effect much of the time.

All of the so-called "punctual" verbs and verb phrases

[1'']Forsyth, Grammar, 49, 71-3. Conation is the expression by the imperfective of "a tendency towards that [critical] point, whether or not it is ever reached" (71). Verbs with conative imperfectives are those whose inherent meaning is a "'leap' into a new state described by the imperfective (e.g. on umer)" (49). Examples include budit', dogonjat' and resat'. See list, 49-50.

[1'']See other examples in Forsyth, Grammar, 71-2.

which Comrie discusses, called conative or group 3 verbs by Forsyth,[1''] present a single point in their perfective forms. However, this point is the culmination of a process, and this process is presented by the imperfective. Similar verbs in English behave in a parallel fashion, but their progressives present only the later part of the process when the endpoint is already in sight. Such "punctual" verbs differ from cough, switch on and similar verbs[1'''] which are not process culmination points. Rather the whole action is seen as a point, although if it is "magnified" sufficiently in time it will become a short line, which can then be viewed from within.

C. From Potential to Reality

The final four transitivity parameters can be grouped conceptually around the idea of passage from potential to reality. Two of them can be seen as prerequisites for affecting the real world: agency (potency or impotence of the subject) for all events and volitionality (will) for events in which the fact that the subject is conscious is significant. The other two gauge the extent to which the real world is in fact affected: affirmation (affirmative or negative) and mode (real or unreal). In terms of relationships with aspect, several comments are pertinent.

[1'']Forsyth, Grammar, 49-51.
[1''']Forsyth's group 2. Forsyth, Grammar, 47-8.

Agency

Agency is a measure of the ability of the subject to transmit effect to the object. Of course, the degree of transmission depends on many other factors as well, but other things being equal the higher the agency the greater the result. As was seen above during the discussion of telicity, this greater result, if it reaches the endpoint, will be reflected by the choice of a perfective verb. For example:

> Moi druz'ja dolgo ugovarivali menja napisat' svoju dissertaciju, no tol'ko moj naucnyj rukovoditel' i nas zavkafedroj sumeli nakonec-to menja ugovorit'.

Volitionality

Volitionality seemingly fits the pattern less well than do other features. Hopper and Thompson class volitionality as high in transitivity. Yet Rassudova's observation that the general-factual imperfective cannot easily be used with non-volitional, negative result verbs like umeret' and zabyt' was cited above in connection with her comments on communicative direction and aspect choice. She also mentions that the imperfective future can have a "nuance of intention" (ottenok namerenija), e.g., Vy budete vyxodit'? Čto vy budete pit'? Ne budem ob ètom sporit', and so on.[***]

Yet perhaps there is not a contradiction here with the

[***]Rassudova, Upotreblenie vidov, 90-1.

central notion of transitivity after all. The future imperfective of intention expresses that intention at the expense of reality, and the perfective with non-volitional verbs could be interpreted as a kind of recognition of the inevitable character of acts of forces superior to our will. In contexts where the reality of the event is clear and where will is not futile or irrelevant, the perfective does say something about volitionality. It can carry, for example, the nuance of expectation. Ja posmotrel fil'm, kotoryj vy mne rekomendovali indicates that the act of seeing the film not only took place, but that it was the fulfilment of someone's will, in this case that of the person who made the recommendation. In affirmative sentences, this nuance is a possible interpretation, but in the interrogative and the negative,[**1] the nuance of expectation is definitely communicated by the perfective: Vy procitali etu knigu?

Affirmation

The affirmation feature has a bearing on aspect choice. It is a frequently observed fact that negative sentences in Russian are usually constructed with the low-transitivity imperfective. From a transitivity point of view, this correlation is completely natural. Negation is the case par excellence of non-affectedness and non-differentiation of the object. The action of the verb is as it were deflected

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[**1]See further discussion of the negative below.

from the object, a concept which can also be used to explain the marking with the genitive case of negated objects, normal when the object is abstract or has no specific referent. Negations are normally far more sweeping in time and space than are affirmations, because instead of lighting up a little circle in the universe of possibilities, they blacken one out, leaving all the rest of the field in the half-light of at least potential reality. On ne videl karandasa still leaves an infinite number of things that he possibly could have seen. On ne prixodil gives one point where he is not, but leaves open a wide world of choice as to where he is. Negation also excludes the possibility of crossing of juncture, expression of totality, and so forth. For all of these reasons, the imperfective as the normal negative form seems natural.

But the perfective is also possible, and carries a nuance of failure to live up to expectations. How can this be explained in transitivity terms? Hopper and Thompson say about negation that it is "a digression into a possible but non-real world."[1] In order for anything to be negated, it must exist as a conceptual possibility in the mind of the speaker. A European in the year 1200 could not have said, "I have no printing press", for at that time the concept of the printing press did not exist in Europe. Any negation,

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[1] Hopper and Thompson, "Transitivity", 287. For a fuller discussion of this idea, see Talmy Givon, "Negation in Language: Pragmatics, Function, Ontology" in Pragmatics, Vol. IX of Syntax and Semantics, ed. by Peter Cole (New York: Academic Press, 1978), 69-112.

though it says nothing positive about the real world, does say something about the speaker. It presents at least implicitly the possibility of the existence of the negated situation. When this is grasped, the logic of the shop employee who when asked U vas mjasa ne budet? replied U nas ryby net. Mjasa naprotiv net will become clear.[203] The perfective, though, does more than present the negated possibility implicitly. It puts across explicitly the presence in the speaker's mind of the concept which is negated, which is not borne out, by reality. Thus it is used to express the non-occurrence of actions which were expected to occur. This use is parallel to the positive use of the perfective to express fulfilment of expectations.

Mode

Aspect use in the subjunctive in Russian (ctoby + l-participle) essentially runs parallel to the indicative. The aspect which would express the reality appears in the subjunctive statement. Ja xocu, ctoby on prisel. On trebujet, ctoby ja ne xodil tuda. Mode itself appears to have little effect on aspect choice, but use of aspect in subjunctive statements is, of course, influenced by transitivity in all the ways outlined above for the indicative.

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[203]With stress on ryby and naprotiv. This example is from that rich source of black humour provided by Soviet jokes (anekdoty).

V. CONCLUSION

In the foregoing examination of aspect, the aspect category was first located in relation to other categories broader and narrower than itself. It was determined that aspect is a particular type of semantic category attached to the verb and expressing a kind of time-related content different from that expressed by tense, having to do with what was called the internal constituency of the situation. Aspect was seen to be more general than Aktionsart, covering the whole language. It was seen to be subjective to a considerable degree, expressing the viewpoint of the speaker on reality as well as the objective nature of that reality. Its nature as a binary privative opposition, that is a pair consisting of one marked and one unmarked member, was discussed. Several proposals as to the nature of Jakobson's "meaning A", carried by the marked perfective member of the aspect pair, were examined.

Next Hopper and Thompson's concept of transitivity was taken as the basis for a discussion of the relationship between transitivity and aspect. The perfective was found to correlate with high transitivity in a variety of ways. It was discovered to be the normal member of the aspect pair to occur in foregrounded narrative discourse contexts, although in other discourse contexts where the speaker's communicative direction, as Rassudova puts it, is different and the verb is "isolated" in a position of high attention

the imperfective too can occur in foregrounded discourse contexts, a fact which Hopper and Thompson failed to deal with because of their exclusive reliance on narrative-type discourse contexts. The perfective perfect was seen to be higher in transitivity than the imperfective perfect, expressing a more radical effect on its object. Finally various relationships between aspect and Hopper and Thompson's transitivity parameters were examined, an examination which confirmed in detail the higher transitivity of the perfective. It consistently tended to express more highly specified, more telic (end-oriented) actions where the effect of the verb's action on the object (and also, in the case of verbs of motion and telic situations, on the subject) was more fundamental and more clearly marked.

Nevertheless it is clear that much remains to be done, both in terms of aspect problems generally and even more in the newer area of the relationship between transitivity and aspect. The transitivity concept offers great possibilities for the achievement of a deeper understanding not only of the aspect category itself, but also its relationship with other elements of the language. But there is a need for more analytical work to determine in more precise, statistical terms what correlations exist between the various transitivity features and aspect choice and meaning.

Hopper and Thompson's presentation of transitivity is not without problem areas. Their neglect of non-narrative

discourse contexts is noted above. There are also some difficulties connected with the features. For example, "two or more participants" is a polar value for high transitivity, which does not seem consistent with "individuation of the object" also being high in transitivity. In fact while two-participant (A and O) situations are of course higher in transitivity than single-participant ones, it would seem that transitivity declines after that. Most of the features influence aspect choice. It can be expected that their effect on the frequency of aspect use will be statistically measurable. But with others, notably telicity and volition, the free choice of either aspect is little affected, but the interpretation of the situation can differ radically according to which aspect is used. Finally the complex relationship between telicity and punctuality stands in need of clarification.

Despite these areas of difficulty, a relationship between the perfective and high transitivity clearly does exist. Intuitively, postulating the existence of such a relationship poses no problems. High transitivity means a high transfer of effect within the sentence. It makes sense that the perfective, as the marked member of the aspect pair, is best suited to communicate information on changes in state, degree, position, affectedness, and so forth.

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